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# **History of American Literature**

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Lectures

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2012/2013

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PERIODS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE:

- 1) **Puritans/Colonial America** 1607-1720
- 2) **The Age of Reason/The Early Republic** 1720-1800
- 3) **American Romanticism**
- 4) **Realism** 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century
- 5) **Modernism** WWI-1950s
- 6) **Postmodernism** 1960s

**PURITANISM**

First Colonisers: French, Spanish, Dutch

- Seeking for adventure and wealth
- Criminals sent from Britain
- People escaping religious persecution

**John Smith 1580-1631**

- \* **1608** *The General History of Virginia*
  - First American book written in English
  - The advantages of settling in New World

New England was the most intellectually advanced, religiously strict, there was a stress put on education.

- **1620** Puritans arrived and settled in the state of Massachusetts.
- **1636** Puritans founded Harvard University.
- Puritans had escaped persecution, but they persecuted every other religion.
- **Calvinism** – the concept of predestination (from the moment of birth, God knows people's destiny).
- Puritans committed much time to find in themselves if they were The Elects, the ones chosen by God.
  - Poverty treated as something shameful.
  - The Bible as the literal world of God.

**Literature written during the Colonial period:**

- Religious: sermons, treatises
- Diaries (tracing God's signs of approval in their everyday life)
- Historical narratives, Indian-captivity narratives

**Basic Puritan beliefs:**

- Total Depravity - every human is born sinful.
- Unconditional Election - concept of predestination.
- Limited Atonement - Jesus died for the chosen only, not for everyone.
- Irresistible Grace - God's grace is freely given, it cannot be earned or denied.
- Perseverance of the "saints" - those elected by God have full power to interpret the will of God, and to live uprightly.

**Common themes:**

- Idealism - both religious and political.
- Pragmatism - practicality and purposiveness

**Michael Wigglesworth 1631-1705**

- **1662** *The Day of Doom* – a religious poem
  - Very popular in the author's time.
- He torments himself in his diaries.
- Unpleasant imagery connected with body parts.
- Warning people about the danger of pleasure.

**William Bradford 1590-1657**

- First historian in New England
- **1630** *Of Plymouth Plantation* - the single most complete authority for the story of the Pilgrims and the early years of the Colony they founded.
  - A historical narrative
  - How Puritans arrive to New World and how God let them to do it, relations with Indians, trips on vessels, the importance of beer, etc.

**Mary Rowlandson 1637-1710/11**

- Most of her family was killed by Indians, she was kidnapped together with her children.
  - 11 weeks and 5 days in captivity
- **1682** *Narrative of Captivity* – how Indians treated the captives, their daily habits.

- She never says anything good about Indians, although they treated her very well.
- It was God who helped her, Indians were driven by Devil.
- **Dramatic irony** – when the words and actions of the characters of a work of literature have a different meaning for the reader than they do for the characters. This is the result of the reader having a greater knowledge than the characters themselves.
- “*I’m not saying it for my own glory, but for the glory of God.*”
- Her English is very pure, it’s pretty realistic.
- Biblical references.

**Slave narrative** – the written accounts of enslaved Africans in Britain and its colonies; very common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Cotton Mather 1663-1728**

- **1692** *Wonders of the Invisible World* – publication describing witches, devils, beings flying in the air.
  - “*The world is alive with evil spirits which are invisible to us.*”
- She started the frenzy of Salem witch trials.

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were always perceived as the helpers of Satan.  
Sexual pathology during the Puritan period.

### **Anne Bradstreet 1612-1672**

- \* Women were not allowed to be taught to read and write.
- She was born in England and she came to America with her husband.
- Publishing poetry in America was impossible; she was accused of plagiarism.
- “*Let such as say our sex is void of reason, / Know ‘tis slander now, but once was treason.*”
- **1666** *Upon a Burning of Our House*
  - The beginning and ending – invocation to God
  - The middle – she describes the house and customs, she stresses that God took her beloved furniture.
- She was not a fanatic, she believed that Puritans and Catholics believe in the same God.
- Not a metaphysical poet, she talks about simple things.
- \* Puritans didn’t believe in forcing someone to marriage.

### **Edward Taylor 1644-1729**

- A country pastor born in England.
- Strictly religious poems.
- He didn’t let anybody read his poems.
- 1637 First publication of his poetry.
- He was acquainted with metaphysical poets, such as John Donne, and George Herbert.
  - Concept-image-comment
- *Upon a Spider Catching a Fly*
  - Comical images

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Puritanism was fading, entertainment became common. Preachers were worried.

**Great Awakening** (Religious revival) – the time when was a call to people to come back to religion and God.

There were meetings organised to convince people to open their hearts to God’s grace.

Destined to go to Heaven is only the believer.

### **Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758**

- **1741** *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* – the most famous sermon.
  - Vivid imagery of Hell with observations of the world and citations of scripture.
  - Excellent language.
  - Emotional and intellectual.
  - Hard logic of consequences of sins.

### **ENLIGHTENMENT or THE AGE OF REASON (18<sup>th</sup> century)**

— A cultural movement of intellectuals in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, which began first in Europe and later in the American colonies.

Purpose: to reform society using reason, challenge ideas grounded in tradition and faith, and advance knowledge through the scientific method.

- \* It promoted scientific thought, skepticism and intellectual interchange and opposed superstition, intolerance and some abuses of power by the church and the state.
- \* People were more interested in seeking for pleasures.

## An archetypal American journey from rags to riches (an American Dream)

### Benjamin Franklin 1706-1790

- The first American who considered America as a place with its own culture.
- He was born in Boston.
- He wrote essays to his brother's newspaper: *Freedom of Thought, Drunkenness, Pride and Hoop Pettycoats*.
- Plenty of common sense, humour, and free thinking; he often spoke against Puritans; the stress on a hard work.
- 1723 Franklin moved to Philadelphia.
- **1733** *Poor Richard's Almanack*
  - **Almanac** – an annual publication that includes information such as weather forecasts, farmers' planting dates, tide tables, proverbs, etc.
  - Optimism and practicality.
- Franklin believed in progress of humanity and in the influence of science.
- He proved Diderot, Voltaire and Hume.
- Political writings and political cartoons.
- **1771-1778** *The Autobiography* - Franklin's account of his life is divided into four parts, reflecting the different periods at which he wrote them.
  - Themes: optimism, practicality of advice
  - An allegory of American Dream.

### Thomas Paine 1737-1809

- An English-American author, pamphleteer, radical, inventor, revolutionary.
- One of the Founding Fathers.
- "A corset-maker by trade, a journalist by profession, and a propagandist by inclination."
- He emigrated to the British American colonies in 1774 and he arrived in time to participated in the American Revolution.
- **1776** *Common Sense* - presented the American colonists with an argument for freedom from British rule at a time when the question of seeking independence was still undecided.
  - Understandable to common people.
  - Structured like a sermon.
  - Biblical references, to make his case to the people.
  - Independence connected with common dissenting Protestant beliefs as a means to present a distinctly American political identity.

### Thomas Jefferson 1743-1826

- One of the Founding Fathers.
- The principal author of the Declaration of Independence.
- **1776** *United States Declaration of Independence* – a formal proclamation of the thirteen American colonies announcing the separation from England.
  - Main points:
    - Revolution was necessary and justified;
    - Blacks weren't treated as men but as a cattle or children;
    - Women had their rights only when protected by their husbands, fathers, sons.
  - "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*"

**Boston, 1619** The first slave-ship, *Jesus of Lübeck*, arrived to America.

Slavery very quickly was discontinued in the North.

### Phillis Wheatley 1753-1784

- The **first** African-American poet and first African-American women to publish her writing.
- Born in Gambia and sold into slavery at the age of 7 or 8. She was purchased by the Wheatley family of Boston, who taught her to read and write, and encouraged her poetry when they saw her talent.
- **1775** *To His Excellency, General Washington*
  - Neoclassical poem,
  - An ode.
- **1773** *On Being Brought from Africa to America*
  - Patriotic from the position of an American citizen.
  - Crediting her slavery as a positive, because it has brought her to Christianity.
    - Negroes may be saved by Christianity.

**ROMANTICISM:**

- emotions and intuition
- the individual is looking inward
- subjective
- dark realms of psyche, mystery, Medieval ruins and castles
- nature
- spiritual refreshment
- wisdom → elderly person or a child
- all kinds of dogmas become unimportant
- common people

**AGE OF REASON:**

- rationality
- society
  
- solving a problem

**EARLY ROMANTICS:****Susanna Rowson 1762-1824**

- A British-American novelist, poet, playwright, religious writer.
- **1791** *Charlotte Temple, Or a Tale of Truth* – it tells of the seduction of a British schoolgirl by a dashing soldier, John Montraville, who brings her to America and there abandons her, pregnant and ill.
  - A **seduction novel**
  - Sentimental novel – characterised by extreme emotion, which attempts to elicit an extreme emotional response in the reader.

**Charles Brockden Brown 1771-1810**

- An American novelist, historian, and editor of the Early National period.
- **1798** *Wieland: or, The Transformation: An American Tale* - details the horrible events that befall Clara Wieland and her brother Theodore's family.
  - The first, and most famous, American **Gothic novel**.
  - Plenty of blood, violence, psychic abnormality, death.

**Washington Irving 1783-1859**

- An American author, essayist, biographer and historian.
- Patriotic themes, works about America.
- Folk tradition – every country has to have its own literary tradition. He invented many folk tales which imitated European tales.
- **1819** *Rip Van Winkle* – the story of a man who sleeps for twenty years and awakens to a greatly changed world.
  - Before the story itself begins, three paragraphs in brackets explain the story's origin: The tale "was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker," a man who dedicated much of his life to studying and recording the history of the Dutch inhabitants of upstate New York.
  - Knickerbocker's published history, the narrator claims, is known for its "scrupulous accuracy," and the tale of *Rip Van Winkle*, therefore, should be accepted as truth.
- **1820** *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* - The story is set in 1790 in the countryside around the Dutch settlement of *Tarry Town* (historical Tarrytown, New York), in a secluded glen called Sleepy Hollow. It tells the story of Ichabod Crane, a lean, lanky and extremely superstitious schoolmaster from Connecticut, who competes with Abraham "Brom Bones" Van Brunt, the town rowdy, for the hand of 18-year-old Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and sole child of a wealthy farmer, Baltus Van Tassel. As Crane leaves the party he attended at the Van Tassel's house, he is pursued by the Headless Horseman, who is supposedly the ghost of a Hessian trooper who had his head shot off by a stray cannonball during "some nameless battle" of the American Revolutionary War. Ichabod mysteriously disappears from the town, leaving Katrina to marry Brom.
  - The nature of the Headless Horseman is left to open interpretation, although the story implies that it was Brom in disguise.
  - Anti-intellectualism, the smart man is ridiculed.
- **1824** *The Devil and Tom Walker* (col. of short stories *Tales of a Traveller*) – a gentleman Geoffrey Crayon, a fictional character created by the author, narrates the tale. It is said in New England in the early 1700s, a narrator relates a story he has heard about a local man's dealings with the devil.
  - References to the American culture: Indians, animals, plants, slavery.
  - Portrait of a woman (Tom's wife): "Tom's wife was a tall termagant, fierce of temper, loud of tongue, and strong of arm. Her voice was often heard in wordy warfare with her husband; and his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words."

**INDIANS**

Indians fit the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because they're different and exotic, "noble savages."

**Songs of the Chippewa:***Love Song*

A loon

I thought it was  
but it was  
my love's  
splashing oar.

**A Teton Lakota Song:***Wolf*

A wolf I considered myself  
But  
I have eaten nothing  
And  
From standing I am tired out.  
A wolf I considered myself  
But  
The owls are hooting  
And  
The night I fear.

Some tribes were very advanced and others were primitive.  
Good and Bad Indians.

**James Fenimore Cooper 1789-1851**

- A prolific and popular American writer of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, he is best remembered as a novelist who wrote numerous sea-stories and the historical novels.
- **1823-1841** *The Leatherstocking Tales* – a series of novels, each featuring the main hero Natty Bumppo, known by European settlers as "Leatherstocking", "The Pathfinder" and "the Trapper", and by the Native Americans as "Deerslayer", "La Longue Carabine" and "Hawkeye".
  - 1823** *The Pioneers* (story date: 1793, part 5)
  - 1826** *The Last of Mohicans* (story date: 1757, part 3)
  - 1827** *The Prairie* (story date: 1804, part 4)
  - 1840** *The Pathfinder* (story date: 1750s, part 2)
  - 1841** *The Deerslayer* (story date: 1740-1755, part 1)
- Hero: the child of white parents, he grew up with Native Americans, becoming a near-fearless warrior skilled in many weapons, one of which is the long rifle.
  - He respects his forest home and all its inhabitants, hunting only what he needs to survive. He lives by the rule, "One shot, one kill."
  - He and his Mohican 'brother' Chingachgook champion goodness by trying to stop the incessant conflict between the Mohicans and the Hurons.
  - Innocent man, normally alone, courageous, honest, generous.
  - An archetypal hero of an American novel.
- Themes:
  - 1) Tension
    - a. Between different kinds of society (Good and Bad Indians)
    - b. Between society and the individual (the one who is right)
    - c. Between civilisation and wilderness
      - \* Cooper protest against destroying wilderness but he knows that it has to happen.
    - d. Between civil rights and natural rights.
  - 2) Frontier – most important factor shaping the American culture, there's always something to be discovered.
  - 3) Women – Natty doesn't trust women, he rejects them, they're evil to him, he dies alone.
  - 4) Racism – Cooper adored Indians, "they're beautiful but they're not human."
- Cooper disliked the idea of a woman marrying an Indian.
  - *The Last of the Mohicans* tells of Cora, white woman who had black ancestors, marrying Uncas, the son of Chingachgook.
- **1820** *Precaution* – Cooper's first book, it was published anonymously.

**ROMANTIC POETRY****William Cullen Bryant 1794-1878**

- **1817** *Thanatopsis*
  - Title – gr. "View of death"
  - Nature discusses death.
  - Theme: man must learn to conduct his life well and not to fear death.
  - Criticism:

- Thomas Holley Chivers: “Only thing [Bryant] ever wrote that may be called Poetry is ‘Thanatopsis,’ which he stole line for line from the Spanish. The fact is, that he never did anything but steal – as nothing he wrote is original.”
- He was influenced by the Graveyard Poets and by Wordsworth.
  - Death treated seriously but not obsessively like in Puritan tradition;
  - Restrained, dignified, simple poetry.

**THE GRAVEYARD POETS** – a number of pre-Romantic English poets of the 18<sup>th</sup> century characterised by their gloomy meditations on mortality, ‘skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms’ in the context of the graveyard. They include: Thomas Parnell, Thomas Gray, James MacPherson, and many more.

**THE FIRESIDE (HOUSEHOLD) POETS** – the first group of American poets to rival British poets in popularity in either country.

Representatives:

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.
- John Greenleaf Whittier
- James Russell Lowell
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

**New England Brahmins** – wealthy Yankee families.

**First Family** (200 years in America) – it mattered how long people lived in America.

**NORTH:** Puritans, a caste of people intellectually superior (educated, snobbish, refined).

- Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story *Never Bet the Devil Your Head* in which he embedded elements of deep dislike for Transcendentalism, calling Boston “Frogpondium.”

**SATURDAY CLUB** – established in 1855, an informal monthly gathering in Boston, Massachusetts, of writers, scientists, philosophers, historians and others. The black and Jews weren’t allowed to be in the Club.

### Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807-1882

- **1855** *The Song of Hiawatha* – an epic poem
  - Exotic, interesting, no passion;
  - Rather for children than adults.
  - Folk themes, history, adventure.
- Themes: gentle, sweet, pure, inoffensive
- Strong conviction that he was an abolitionist.

### William Ellery Channing 1780-1842

- **1820** *The Moral Argument against Calvinism*
  - True spirit of Christianity: love, charity, benevolence, not followed in Puritan doctrine.
  - Puritanism as a perversion of Christianity, it was fixed on Doom.
- Unitarianism clear the way for Transcendentalism.

## **TRANSCENDENTALISM**

### Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882

- One of the major American philosophers, Transcendentalist.
- Harvard University
- Minister → he resigned, doubts about Christian doctrine.
- Essays:
  - **1841** *Self-reliance*
    - Trust yourself, you will make the best decision
    - “A man must be a non-conformist, nothing is sacred apart your own mind”
      - Selfishness, it might be too radical.
      - “Do not pray” – we mustn’t regret anything in a prayer.
      - You have to have contact with God, but it should be only a contemplation of beauty and nature.
      - “Creeds as disease of intellect” – any dogma is a disease.
      - “Travelling is a superstition (...) the wise man stays at home”
  - **1836** *Nature*
    - No personality of its own.
    - “Nature always wears the colours of the Spirit”
    - “I become a transparent eyeball...” → not influenced by anything, he rejects and accepts the world through him.

- “Nothing as beautiful as human nature”
  - Calvinism: people are dirt
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- **1837 American Scholar**
- **1838 Divinity School Address** – attack on religion
  - Almost everybody could understand it, very simple language
  - Individualism, sanctity, autonomy, importance of self-reliance, obedience to the natural instinct, obligation to the optimum and hope.
  - Themes: Spiritual nature of reality, benevolence of nature, existence of Unifying Over-Soul (which explain the diversity of life).
    - We are all a part of one spirit, the world is the part of God (Unifying Over-Soul).
- Emerson is not against logic, but instinct is better.
- He was adored during his lifetime, a social person.

Middle Class was doing pretty well in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Fashion: Americans going to Europe for summer vacation.

#### Philosophy of Transcendentalism:

- 1) Divinity dwells in the world, not separately.
- 2) The human soul participates in Divinity.
- 3) Individuals make decisions for themselves best.
- 4) Nature and mind nurture each other.
- 5) Logic leads to a lower order of truth than instinct.

#### The style of the Transcendentalists:

- They were not good stylists; they are uneven, sometimes beautiful and sometimes clumsy writing.

#### Henry David Thoreau 1817-1862

- A disciple of Emerson.
  - He put Emerson’s philosophy into practice.
- He wasn’t accepted to the Transcendental Club because of his eccentricity.
- Thoreau protested against anything he didn’t like to do.
  - He spent 1 day in prison for not paying taxes.
- **1849 Civil Disobedience** – an essay in which Thoreau argues that individuals should not permit governments to overrule or atrophy their consciences, and that they have a duty to avoid allowing such acquiescence to enable the government to make them the agents of injustice.
  - Primal title: *Resistance to Civil Disobedience*
  - We have right to stand against government
    - “That government is best which governs least”
  - Government should interfere as little as possible.
  - He criticise the power of state.
    - “The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way.” – the Americans would have made more if the government didn’t stop them.
  - The doctrine of *lasses-faire* – do what you want.
  - “I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined” (meaning Church).
  - “The state is not armed with superior wit or honesty, but with superior physical strength.”
  - Democracy: “The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true respect for the individual.”
    - He’s for democracy, but he thinks that democracy is not the final state.
- **1854 Walden**
  - Title: a name of a pond
  - Thoreau decided to live close to the nature, in wilderness, by himself.
  - He makes a list of what he took with him.
  - He lived there 3 years, it was only 3 miles from Concord.
  - Simplicity of life, contemplation of nature.
  - “A man is rich in proportion to things which he can afford to let alone.” – richness of the soul.
  - “Live free and uncommitted” – commitment to possession



- Commitment had a colouring of something disgraceful, avoiding responsibility  
→ 1850s and 1950s
  - The hippie generation of the 1950s was very similar to the generation of the 1850s.
- “Simplicity, instead of 3 meals a day, eat one”
  - “love your life” and “cultivate poverty” – Hippie slogans.

### Margaret Fuller 1810-1850

- She was a member of the Transcendental Club.
- 1840-1842 She became the first editor of the transcendentalist journal *The Dial*.
- Social activist, public lecturer, the soul of society.
- **1843** *Summer on the Lakes* – a non-fictional work about her camping trip.
  - Farmers and Indians are being destroyed by civilization.
- **1845** *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* – a sociological and political text about the actual position of women in the time.
  - “Women had to have the same right for freedom to develop the outer and the inner self.”
  - She wants to propose a model of the woman fundamentally different from the woman imposed by the culture of the time.
    - Social freedom for women in America
      - No arranged marriages.
  - **A model of separate spheres**: a man rules the public sphere and a woman rules the private sphere. These spheres mustn’t interfere with each other.
  - The only possible professions for women: teaching, writing and some menial jobs.
  - The cult of **true womanhood** – a true woman is a very superior being, she’s pious, domestic, submissive, and she’s an inspiration to her husband.
  - A woman had a lot of freedom but only in her own house.
  - **The Real New Women** are able to have healthy children; let them exercise, work and educate.
  - “This [*Woman in the Nineteenth Century*] is in a way a translated idealism to social and political realm, in other words, it’s a bridge between a romantic philosophy and a social reform.” – *The Great Lawsuit: Man vs. Men, Woman vs. Women in The Dial*.
    - The political nature of the problem
    - Conflict between the individual and the group
  - The issue of **androgyny** - the combination of masculine and feminine characteristics.
    - “Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But in fact they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.”
- She wanted to write the history of European Revolution, so she went to Europe to do some research. She fell in love a revolutionist.

### Women’s Rights:

- Education and employment,
- To hold property,
  - Rich men changed the law to protect their daughters in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- To keep children
  - If you were divorced in 1850s, you couldn’t keep the children, they stayed with their fathers.

### **The position of women and slaves was similar.**

### Edgar Allan Poe 1809-1849

- He was despised by serious writers, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and T.S. Eliot.
- An eccentric, always poor, pessimistic, excellent relations with women.
  - He married Virginia Clemm, his 13-year-old cousin. She died in 1847 of tuberculosis. He died soon after, his body was found on the street.
- He is thought to be the first serious American literary critic.
- Society called for common sense, he called for heresy of didactic.
- Beauty, not truth, was important to him.
- He writes about awful things and nastiness.
- **1849** *Annabel Lee* – the poem explores the theme of death of a beautiful woman.
  - All kinds of perversion: paedophilia, necrophilia.
- **1846** *The Philosophy of Composition* – an essay that elucidates a theory about how good writers write when they write well.
  - Rules how to write good poetry:
    - (a) Poetry must have the idea of effect – incidents and certain tone must be combined.
    - (b) Poetry should be for everybody.

- (c) A poem shouldn't be too long – about 100 lines.
- (d) Poetry should be universally appreciable.
- (e) It should affect the reader to contemplate beauty from intellect and passion. It elevates the soul.
- (f) Melancholic and sad tone – it's good if you cry because of a beautiful tone.
- (g) A poem should have a refrain; it gives a sense of certain monotony, pleasure of the repetition.
- (h) Refrain should be brief and emphatic – letters R and O.
- (i) There must be a thematic reason for repetition – i.e. 'raven'.
- (j) Topic should be beautiful and melancholic.
- (k) Climax should be most painful (masochism).
- (l) Traditional rhythm and rhymes – it doesn't have to be original.
- (m) Setting: woods, chamber (it can be richly decorated), stormy night.
- (n) The ending should be grim, ominous, and serious.
- (o) Complexity, suggestiveness, deeper meaning are superfluous.
- **1845 *The Raven***
  - "Take thy beak / out of my heart."
- **The gothic tales:**
  - **1839 *The Fall of the House of Usher***
  - **1843 *Black Cat***
    - Sadistic, about a man torturing a cat.
  - **1838 *Ligeia*** – hallucinatory experience.
  - **1835 *Berenice***
- **Detective tales** – Poe is considered the father of a detective story; They are based on hard logic, they are not weird.
  - **1841 *The Murders in the Rue Morgue***
  - **1844 *The Purloined Letter***
- He was contempt to common people, he reinforced slavery, he was against everybody.

### **Nathaniel Hawthorne 1804-1864**

- A lot of ambiguity, we're not sure what the answer is.
- A close friend of the group of Transcendentalists (optimistic); his prose was rather pessimistic.
- Symbolism and allegory (allegorical stories, stock characters).
- A public person, he worked as a secretary to a politician.
- He wrote with a great detachment, attachment to the past.
- Literature is an art, it has to be cultivated.
- Moral concerns that there should be moral issues. He sought self-knowledge.
  - We cannot control many of our dark sides.
- Focus on the inner life of the characters.
- Themes: curse, pride, witchcraft, secret guilt, sin, haunted mind, intellectual and moral pride.
- 3rd person moralising narrator.
- Plenty of irony.
- He married Sophia Peabody, they lived in a commune (it was very fashionable).
  - 19<sup>th</sup> century communes:
    - Brook Farm (1841-1847) – a commune for intellectuals.
    - Fruitlands – a Transcendentalist community.
    - Commune of shakers – everything is sinful, we have to finish this existence in hard work, sex was prohibited, total celibacy.
    - Oneida Perfectionists – a religious commune, Communalism (in the sense of communal property and possessions), Complex Marriage, Male Continence, Mutual Criticism and Ascending Fellowship.
- Hawthorne wrote novels, short stories, and a biography of his friend, Franklin Pierce.
  - He was an inventor of short stories:
    - Science brings evil, man is fighting with God and he fails.
      - *Rappaccini's Daughter* – Beatrice is a daughter of a scientist, she's confined to the lush and locked in gardens filled with poisonous plants by her father.
      - *The Birth-Mark* – obsession with human perfection; Aylmer is a brilliant scientist and philosopher who has abandoned his career and experiments to marry the beautiful Georgiana. She is perfect, except for a tiny birthmark that is on her cheek. The mark is red and in the shape of a hand.

- Sin of pride:
  - *Young Goodman Brown* – Hawthorne addresses the Puritans that humanity exists in a state of depravity, exempting those who are born in a state of grace. The story follows Young Goodman Brown's journey into self-scrutiny which results in his loss of faith.
  - *The Minister's Black Veil*
  - *The Gentle Boy* – persecution of the Quakers.
- According to him, **a romance** and **a novel** are something different.
  - (a) **A romance** – territory between actual and imaginary, the writer creates the truth.
  - (b) **A novel** – true and realistic.
- Common attitude to women: patriarchal, intellect is not for women.
- **1837** *The Maypole of Merry Mount* – the 'crew of Comus' celebrates the marriage of a youth and a maiden. They dance around a maypole and are described as resembling forest creatures. Their festivities are interrupted by the arrival of John Endicott and his Puritan followers. Endicott orders for the people of Merrymount to be whipped. Stricken by the newlyweds, he spares them but orders they be put in more conservative clothing. He also orders the youth cut his hair in the 'pumpkin shell' style in order to show the Puritan's strictness.
- **1851** *The House of Seven Gables* – an old and decaying house, and a "decaying" family, a young girl that brings light.
  - A gothic novel.
  - Themes: guilt, retribution and atonement.
  - Suggestions of the supernatural and witchcraft.
- **1852** *The Blithedale Romance* - The main character, Miles Coverdale, embarks on a quest for betterment of the world through the agrarian lifestyle and community of the Blithedale Farm.
  - The character of Zenobia is said to have been modelled upon **Margaret Fuller**. She's an intellectual strong woman-activist. She falls in love with a man who's not interested in her, so she kills herself by drowning.
- **1860** *The Marble Faun: Or, The Romance of Monte Beni* – the romance is set in a fantastical Italy.
  - It mixes the elements of a fable, pastoral, gothic novel, and travel guide.
- **1850** *The Scarlet Letter* – set in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Puritan Boston during the years 1642 to 1649, it tells the story of Hester Prynne, who conceives a daughter through an adulterous affair and struggles to create a new life of repentance and dignity.
  - "Somebody in America finally published a Book."
  - Themes: secret guilt, obsession, the choices we make, free will, isolation.
  - Unromantic attitude towards Indians and nature.
    - Wood = an evil place.
  - A criticism of Puritanism, but Hawthorne never tells what he approves of.
  - Characters:
    - **Arthur Dimmesdale** – a Puritan minister, he has fathered an illegitimate child, Pearl, with Hester Prynne and seeks to hide the truth of his relationship with her.
      - A central hero.
      - He uses intellect, he strives to overcome his sin.
      - At the end, he's triumphant and dies in glory.
      - He's idealized, directed towards Heaven.
    - **Hester Prynne** – portrayed as a woman condemned by her Puritan neighbours. She follows her instincts.
      - The character has been called "among the first and most important female protagonists in American literature."
      - She's not the central character.
      - Hester represents practicality, she's directed towards the ground, Earth.
    - **Roger Chillingworth (Prynne)** – the estranged husband of Hester Prynne, who reappears under the different name, and proceeds to plot against Hester and Dimmesdale, and becomes an embodiment of evil, as his physical appearance shifts.
    - **Pearl** – she is perfect, she is the letter 'A' herself. She's very complex.
  - Issue of sin – Hester sinned many times; she caused Dimmesdale cursed, she concealed the truth.
    - Religious morality:
      - Calvinism – she's sinful and condemned.
      - Catholicism – she's sinful but she's saved by her good deeds.
    - Other types of morality:
      - European Romanticism – she's innocent, because she followed her natural instincts.
      - Transcendentalism – she's guilty, she concealed the truth.

- The narrator imposes too much moralising and interpreting.
- Issue of pride: Hester knows that she sinned, she embroiders the letter 'A' (for adultery). She's too proud to tell the name of her lover. She insists on keeping the child.
- Hypocrisy: Dimmesdale hides the sin, he tells the congregation he sinned but he never says what he did. He whips himself in secrecy.
- Two prominent colours: grey and red.
- Very gloomy, the only bright spot is when Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the forest, that's the moment of happiness.
- When Dimmesdale stands on the town scaffold, three people are passing:
  - The governor – Earth
  - Mistress Hibbins – Hell
  - Reverend Mr John Wilson – Heaven
- Symbolism: letter 'A'

**PURITANISM:** pessimistic

**ROMANTICISM:** optimistic

**TRANSCENDENTALISM:** more serious, the truth is the most important.

### **DOMESTIC FICTION (1820-1870)**

**Also called as Sentimental or Woman's**

Characteristics:

- Plot focuses on a heroine who embodies one of two types of exemplar:
  - the angel
  - the practical woman
- The heroine struggles for self-mastery, learning the pain of conquering her own passions .
- The heroine learns to balance society's demands for self-denial with her own desire for autonomy.
- She suffers at the hands of abusers of power before establishing a network of surrogate kin.
- The tales generally end with marriage, usually one of two possible kinds:
  - Reforming the bad or "wild" male,
  - Marrying the solid male who already meets her qualifications.
- The novels may use a "language of tears" that evokes sympathy from the readers.

**Domestic fiction does not fit the literary canon of the time.**

Criteria for canonical literature:

- Cultural – tradition, philosophy and religion that formed American society,
  - Type of a hero: an outcast, a rebel, an eccentric;
- Originality – it need to introduce new style or new philosophy;
- National themes need to be revised.;
- Periodization - the attempt to categorize universal history or divide time into named blocks.
- Aesthetic values;
- Beauty of style.

All these criteria are not universal.

Idea of the **token** – something odd that does not fit, i.e. Emily Dickinson.

Reason why women writers were excluded from the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature:

- 1) Bias – critics were male who protected their business.
- 2) Writing only about home affairs and love.
- 3) Themes and theories are gender related.

### **Caroline Kirkland 1801-1864**

- Partly autobiographical novels.
- She gives the picture how life looked like.
- **1839** *A New Home; Who'll Follow*
- *Forest Life*

### **Susan Warner 1819-1885**

- She started to write because her father lost his money.
- Religious fiction, children's fiction.
- **1850** *The Wide, Wide World*
  - It does not sentimentalise adventure or love.
  - Message: the woman will not win in this world, she has to be submissive.
  - Great stylistically.

**Maria Cummins 1827-1866**

- She didn't write for money.
- Literature mostly for women.
- **1854 *The Lamplighter*** - the story of Gertrude Flint, an abandoned and mistreated orphan rescued at the age of eight by Trueman Flint, a lamplighter, from her abusive guardian, Nan Grant. Gertrude is lovingly raised and taught virtues and religious faith. She becomes a moralistic woman. In adulthood, she is rewarded for her long suffering with marriage to a childhood friend.
  - Very popular.
  - Sentimental, idealistic novel.
  - Mix of weird styles.
  - Didactic and moralistic.
  - "The symbol of trashy literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century."

**Fanny Fern 1811-1872**

- Her husband died and left her without any money and profession.
- In a very short time, she became the most famous journalist in America in her times.
  - An icon of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- **1855 *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time*** – a roman à clef. This autobiographical novel can be divided into three phases: Ruth's happy marriage, impoverished widowhood, and rise to fame and financial independence as a newspaper columnist.
  - Plenty of sad events, but the heroine stands on her feet.
  - Ending: the heroine publishes a novel, it's equal to marriage.
- She wrote short editorials varied in themes.
  - *A Call to Be a Husband* – laughing at women.
  - Some were openly feminist, some were very personal.
  - She laughs at men and women; very risky topics, such as venereal disease.
- She can be sweetly sentimental, sarcastic and realistic.

**E.D.E.N. Southworth 1819-1899**

- She was forced to write after her husband's death.
- Her novels were never finished, they were long and complicated.
- Changes in the mood of the novel: she goes from life tragedy to something trivial.
- **1859 *Capitola, Or the Hidden Hand*** – it features Capitola Black, a tomboyish antagonist that finds herself in a myriad of adventures.
  - The girl has a mask in the shape of a hand.
  - The hidden hand of God, she always wins.
  - She never requires help from the others, it's her who helps others.
  - She's married to a man whom she can control.
- She's the most erotic writer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Augusta Jane Evans Wilson 1835-1909**

- One of the last famous domestic writers.
- **1867 *St. Elmo*** – it features sexual tension between the protagonist St. Elmo, who was cynical, and the heroine Edna Earl, who was beautiful and devout.
  - Black character, a womanizer.
  - The major heroine: young girl, extremely moral and strong-willed.
  - Style: very long sentences.
- Evans Wilson wants her readers to be educated, she writes with the intention of improving the reader's mind.
- Very conservative in political sphere,
  - She believed that only rich people should vote.
  - She was pro-slavery.
  - Women should concentrate on the things they're good at
- Very erotic novels.

**Women were important writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

**Form: Serialised novels in magazines.**

**Aims: to earn money, to teach the reader, not to be great literature.**

**Attitude to women: be submissive.**

**Themes: religion, temperance (against alcohol), slavery.**

**ABOLITIONISM**

- \* Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 mandated that states to which escaped slaves fled were obligated to return them to their masters upon their discovery and subjected persons who helped runaway slaves to criminal sanctions.
- \* 1859 an attempt to start a liberation movement led by John Brown.
  - When he was hanged “it made gallons glorious like the cross.”

**Attitude to slavery:**

- Abolitionism was not a respected idea because of its sentimentalism, softness and pity. Abolitionists in the North were treated with ignorance.
  - Nathaniel Hawthorne was pro-slavery, he supported Franklin Pears.
  - Abolitionism – avoiding saying what slavery is.

**Harriet Beecher Stowe 1811-1896**

- **1852** *Uncle Tom's Cabin* – an anti-slavery novel.
  - Very sensational with sadistic scenes.
  - It makes the reader cry.
  - Sentimental scenes of death.
  - It does not call for any rebellion, just for Christian forgiveness.
  - **Very politically influential novel.**
- “So this is the little lady who started this great war.” (Lincoln)

**The plantation ideal** – how the South explained their ways.

They continue the tradition of Greek classicism and the tradition of feudalism.

The planter as the father of a family, he's wise and severe.

Southern Belle – the wife of the planter, she's pure, kind, delicate, lovely, innocent, but also ignorant.

All the blacks were considered as children, they were treated as mentally weaker.

White trash – white people who lived in the South and did not hold slaves.

Field blacks under the control of an overseer.

**Black stereotypes:**

- **Uncle Tom** – an ideal black, faithful to his owner like a dog.
- **Nat** – young, strong, rebellious, the dangerous rapid.
- **Sambo** – a young boy, always happy, lazy.
- **Mammy** – she loves the white family, very strong-minded, she's not submissive.
- **The black seductress**

**SLAVE NARRATIVE** – a story of somebody who was a slave, escaped, dictated the story to white people and published it.

**Frederick Douglass 1818-1895**

- **1845** *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* - a memoir and treatise on abolition, the text describes the events of his life and is considered to be one of the most influential pieces of literature to fuel the abolitionist movement of the early 19th century in the United States.
  - 1838 Douglass escaped from slavery.
  - Excellent style, very good vocabulary.
  - He believed that education was the way to the liberation.
  - His life as an American Dream, he feels as an American.
  - Central metaphor: whipping
    - The book is extremely graphic and cruel.

**Harriet Jacobs 1813-1897**

- **1861** *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* - an in-depth chronological account of Jacobs's life as a slave, and the decisions and choices she made to gain freedom for herself and her children.
  - Aim: slavery corrupted white men and led them to the sin.
  - She became a lover of a white man, he promised her freedom.
  - Symbol of black life: imprisonment, hiding.
- She hid at the attic in her grandmother's house for 7 years.
- She was almost captured, somebody, in secret, bought her and her children out.

**Herman Melville 1819-1891**

- From a wealthy family but his father lost all their money.
- A simple sailor, that is why his sea descriptions are so realistic.

- **1846 *Typee*** - a classic in the literature of travel and adventure partly based on his actual experiences as a captive on the island Nuku Hiva in the South Pacific Marquesas Islands, in 1842.
  - An idyllic life on a tropical island.
- **1847 *Omoo: A Narrative of the South Seas*** – a sequel to *Typee*, and, as such, was also autobiographical. After leaving Nuku Hiva, the main character ships aboard a whaling vessel which makes its way to Tahiti, after which there is a mutiny and the majority of the crew are imprisoned on Tahiti. The book follows the actions of the narrator as he explores Tahiti and remarks on their customs and way of life.
- **1849 *Mardi, and a Voyage Thither*** - Melville's first pure fiction work. It details the travelings of an American sailor who abandons his whaling vessel to explore the South Pacific.
- **1851 *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*** - the adventures of wandering sailor Ishmael, and his voyage on the whale-ship *Pequod*, commanded by Captain Ahab. Ishmael soon learns that Ahab has one purpose on this voyage: to seek out Moby Dick, a ferocious, enigmatic white sperm whale. In a previous encounter, the whale destroyed Ahab's boat and bit off his leg, which now drives Ahab to take revenge.
  - A microcosm of human society = the whaling ship
  - The hero – Captain Ahab
  - A realistic book about whaling,
    - Very short chapters describing the life on a ship.
  - An adventure novel.
  - Characters:
    - **Captain Ahab** – the egomaniacal character filled with obsession and monomania.
      - Symbolically Moby Dick stands for the Puritan God, Ahab fights with somebody who's stronger than him.
    - **Ishmael** – the narrator, and a junior member of the crew of the *Pequod*. His real name is unknown, he wants to be addressed with biblical name (Ishmael is a symbol of meekness).
    - **Starbuck** – the first mate of the *Pequod*, he's a Quaker who believes that Christianity offers a way to interpret the world around him. He acts as a conservative force against Ahab's mania.
    - **Stubb** – the second mate of the *Pequod*. Chiefly characterised by his mischievous good humour, he is easy-going and popular. He proves a bit of a nihilist, always trusting in fate and refusing to assign too much significance to anything.
    - **Queequeg** – Ishmael's best friend. He is a composite of elements of African, Polynesian, Islamic, Christian, and Native American cultures. He is brave and generous, and enables Ishmael to see that race has no bearing on a man's character.
    - **Pip** – a young black boy who fill the role of a cabin boy or jester on the *Pequod*. He goes insane after being left to drift alone in the sea for some time.
  - Equality: one of the first anti-racist novels. The most important workers on the ship are coloured.
    - American economy needs blacks.
  - Attitude to nature: it became an encyclopaedia of knowledge about whales (it even describes the anatomy of the whale).
    - Ishmael's attitude changes throughout the novel. He describes whales as beings emotionally close to people → pro-ecological.
  - Humour:
    - All sexual references seem funny:
      - 'sperm' repeated many times
      - The scene in bed
      - Chapter 95 *The Gassock* – description of the whale's penis
      - Chapter 95 *The Squeeze of the Hand* – sailors have to squeeze the sperm in order to make it smooth
        - Allusion to masturbation
      - This is obvious that when sailors are in the sea for three years, there would be some homoerotic attitudes.
  - Insanity = wisdom
    - Insanity stands for human greatness (Ahab) and horror of love (Pip).
  - Limits of knowledge: "Human knowledge is always limited and insufficient"
    - Knowledge of God leads to destruction.
  - Social criticism: America is capitalistic, anti-racism.
  - Symbols:
    - 1) Whiteness – it represents the unnatural and threatening; albinos, creatures that (according to Ishmael) live in extreme and inhospitable environments; waves

breaking against rocks. These examples reverse the traditional association of whiteness with purity. Whiteness conveys both lack of meaning and unreadable excess of meaning that confounds individuals. Moby Dick is the pinnacle of whiteness, and Melville's characters cannot objectively understand the White Whale. Ahab, for instance, believes that Moby Dick represent evil, while Ishmael fails in his attempts to determine scientifically the whale's fundamental nature.

- 2) Queequeg's coffin – it alternatively symbolises life and death. Queequeg has it built when he is seriously ill, but when he recovers, it becomes a chest to hold his belongings and an emblem of his will to live. He perpetuates the knowledge of tattooed on his body carving it onto the coffin's lid. The coffin further comes to symbolise life, in a morbid way, when it replaces the Pequod's life buoy.
  - 3) The Pequod – named after a Native American tribe in Massachusetts that did not long survive the arrival of white men and thus memorialising an extinction, the Pequod is a symbol of doom. It is painted a gloomy black and covered in whale teeth and bones, literally bristling with the mementos of violent death. It is, in fact, marked for death.
  - 4) Moby Dick – to the Pequod's crew, Moby Dick is a concept onto which they can displace their anxieties about their dangerous and very often frightening jobs. Because they have no delusions about Moby Dick acting malevolently towards men or literally embodying evil, tales about the whale allow them to confront their fear, manage it, and continue to function. Ahab, on the other hand, believes that Moby Dick is a manifestation of all that is wrong with the world, and he feels that it is his destiny to eradicate this symbolic evil. The White Whale can be read as an allegorical representation of an unknowable God. As a profitable commodity, it fits into the scheme of white economic expansion and exploitation In the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a part of the natural world, it represents the destruction of the environment by such hubristic expansion.
    - a. Moby Dick as an animal → persecuted animal
    - b. Moby Dick as a devil → mean, malicious
    - c. Moby Dick as God → indifferent, doesn't care
- Narration:
    - Chronological but it is broken by descriptions of the whales.
    - A combination of drama, descriptions, dialogues.
    - It is not a book typical for its time, it is as if Melville saw what will happen 100 years later.
  - "He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes." – letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1851.
  - We can see *Moby-Dick* as:
    - Symbolic
    - Psychological
    - Adventure novel
    - Encyclopaedia
    - Drama
    - Social criticism
    - Metaphysics
    - Realistic.
  - **1852** *Pierre: or, The Ambiguities*
    - The publication was critical and it was a financial disaster for Melville.
    - Universally condemned for both its moral and its style.
  - **1888** *Billy Budd* – a novella about a captain who sentences to death one sailor who committed some offence.
    - It was left unfinished at Melville's death in 1891 and not published until 1924.
    - A masculine fiction.
  - **1853** *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* – the story is narrated by the lawyer, the man who employs Bartleby. For the first days, Bartleby works very well, but one day he refuses to examine the copies by saying, "I would prefer not to."
    - A really deep philosophical story.

### Walter "Walt" Whitman 1819-1892

- A humanist, he was a part of the transition between Transcendentalism and Realism, incorporating both views in his works.
- He's among the most influential poets in the American canon, often called the father of free verse.
- His poetry was thought as immoral, dirty, radical.



- He was an extrovert and very often he created legends about himself.
- Probably homosexual.
- He doesn't diminish the role of the mind or the spirit; rather he elevates the human mind and form, deeming both worthy of poetic phrase.
- He was very much for democracy and equality but quite often he stressed that rebellion against convention is the most important.
- Nothing human is strange for him.
- Poem resemble natural speech, organic form.
- The greatest happiness is to be found in natural laws: democracy, love, religion.
- Against slavery, equality between men and women (he uses the phrase 'him or her').
- He was the first one to write about human body extensively (sweat, hair on a chest).
- Work is important, every work should be respected.
- His poetry praises nature and the individual human's role in it.
- **1855** *Leaves of Grass* – a poetry collection.
  - It exalted the body and the material world.
  - Grass – democracy being average.
- *Song of Myself*
  - Emphasis on an all-powerful "I", who serves as narrator.
  - The "I" tries to relieve both social and private problems by using powerful affirmative cultural images.
- *I Sing the Body Electric*
- Style: very long detailed descriptions, repetitions, simple and legible style, free verse.
- He never wrote openly about homosexuality, he wrote about the beauty of male body.
- Pre-hippie, he loved his body too much so he didn't take any drugs.

### **Emily Dickinson 1830-1886**

- Never married, but probably she fell in love with a married minister.
- She wrote over 1700 poems.
- The poems are recognisable by the numbers, they don't have titles.
- Form:
  - rhymes are slant intentionally,
  - short poems with short lines,
  - very compact and brief images that are not conventional,
  - very shocking images,
    - 464: a dying person who sees an ugly buzzing fly that disturbs her
  - Plenty of capital letters
  - She doesn't use a lot of punctuation, instead, she used dashes,
  - Metaphors are weird and puzzling
  - Voices:
    - The voice of a child, mad person, scientist
    - She changes the voice
      - *III*: change of voice from childish to a frightened one.
  - Majority of her poems is grave and sad.
- She was rediscovered in the 1920s.
- Some critics embraced her, criticised her poems in which she spoke from a perspective of a child.
- Themes: death, (mental) pain, religion, secrets and truths about human nature, about writing itself, love, eroticism.
- Breaking conventions: her erotic poems were quite opened, refusal to follow the rules of writing poems in her times.
- Rebellion against God: as a child she postponed making the statement that she was Christian. She resigned from the religious boarding school.
  - Division between God the Father (Puritan God, she's against him) and Christ (she spoke quite softly about him).
    - 545: "The Bible is an antique volume written by faded men..."
  - God as a burglar and banger:
    - 313: very ironic

- 1719: "God is indeed a jealous  
God  
He cannot bear  
To see  
That we would  
Rather not with him  
But with each other  
Play.

- Rebellion against social conventions: she showed no respect to the pastors who gave long and scholarly sermons (1207), she was against organised religion (324), she detested domestic duties (505).
- Eroticism: 249, 211, 520
  - 'luxury' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century meant 'physical pleasure'
- Homoerotic poetry: 458, 518
- She wrote excellent letters: *A Master Letters* addressed to someone whom she called 'Master', probably it was her lover.
- 577: really weird, connecting death with sexuality
- Role of a mad woman: she wasn't mad, but she acted as if she were (435).
- Ambivalence towards her own poetry: 919 (joy of writing), 1659 (she's afraid of fame)
- Theme of mental pain and death: 341 (the feeling of indifference after a great pain), 712 (death as a suitor)

Whitman	Dickinson
– Mainly optimistic	– Mainly pessimistic
– Extrovert	– Introvert
– Ignorant	– Serious about life, death, sex
– Form: long lines, plenty of repetitions and descriptions	– Form: brief short lines, compact images
– Patriotic themes, sense of history	– No patriotism
– Ungrammatical form	
– Voice: private, confessional	
– Eroticism	
– Unique symbols	
– Sense of pride	

**They can be considered as Romantic poets, but they wrote in the time of Realism**

### REALISM 1860's – WW2

- "The Gilded Age" - the term coined by writers Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today, satirizing what they believed to be an era of serious social problems hidden by a thin layer of gold.
  - Slavery is abolished;
  - new states are admitted (Alaska, Hawaii);
  - expanding economy into new areas (heavy industry);
  - American imperialism;
  - Indians are kept in the reservations,
    - **1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn**, an armed engagement between combined forces of Northern Cheyenne and Sioux tribes against the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army;
  - huge numbers of immigrants;
  - American Frontier is closed;
  - mass culture;
  - technology;
  - exhibitions,
    - **1876 The Centennial Exposition** in Philadelphia, to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia,
      - The excitement of realism referred to the things made by man,
      - Women had separate spaces which were strictly domestic;
  - the Blacks' rights are almost all taken away, they weren't citizens at all;
  - proletariat – labour unions are organised, strikes as a method to attain control over the labour market,

- **1877** ten minors hanged for organising a strike,
- economic growth
  - John D. Rockefeller
  - Andrew W. Mellon
  - Andrew Carnegie
  - Henry Flagler
  - Henry H. Rogers
  - J.P. Morgan
  - Cornelius Vanderbilt
  - The Astor family
- Many of them participated in immense acts of philanthropy (referred to by A. Carnegie as the "*Gospel of Wealth*") and used private money to endow thousands of colleges, hospitals, museums, academies, schools, opera houses, public libraries, symphony orchestras, and charities.

### **Horatio Alger 1832-1899**

Formulaic rags-to-riches juvenile novels that followed the adventures of bootblacks, newsboys, peddlers, buskers, and other impoverished children in their rise from humble backgrounds to lives of respectable middle-class in security and comfort.

- *If our body and intentions are clean, we will get rich.*

### **Louisa May Alcott 1832-1888**

- **1868** *Little Women* - a fiction novel for girls that was a milestone in literature for children.
  - *A small human being is not a small adult but a child.*

## **THE GREAT REALISM**

- A reaction against Romanticism.
- It doesn't say that God does not exist; realists simply don't deal with God.
- Anything unknowable for humans is unimportant.
- Rejection of idealism, the embrace of rationalism.
- Influence:
  - Development of science (the use of documentation in scholar researches in the 19<sup>th</sup> century),
  - *Stick to things that can be proven.*
- Structure:
  - Narrator has limited omniscience,
  - Form is complex,
  - Endings are open (there are different ways of interpreting it),
  - The most importance is placed on characters,
  - Symbols and allegories are unpopular,
  - Rarely about aristocracy, described people as they are and not as they should be,
  - Recognizable geographical places,
  - Ethics and complexity of moral choices are necessary,
  - Values are not preached but dramatized.

### **Rebecca Harding Davis 1831-1910**

- She is deemed a pioneer of literary realism in American literature.
- **1861** *Life in the Iron Mills* – a short story (novella) set in the factory world of the nineteenth century; it is an important text on labour and women's issues;
  - *It shows the ugly side of life.*
  - Melodramatic, sad, cruel,
  - Artistically not a very good piece of writing.

Her son, **Richard Harding Davis, 1864-1916**, was a journalist and writer of fiction and drama, known foremost as the first American war correspondent to cover the Spanish-American War, the Second Boer War, and the First World War.

### **Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens) 1835-1910**

- He used different pen names; his primary pen name came from his years working on Mississippi riverboats, where two fathoms, a depth indicating safe water for passage of boat, was measured on the sounding line.
- Twain represents the South-West, he is the first one who matters,
- He is deemed a pioneer of literary realism in American literature (*Harding Davis was first*).
- He experiments with style, invents the American English, he writes as American speak.

- **Vernacular** - the native language or native dialect of a specific population, very popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- He invents for himself the job of the professional novelist.
- Literary criticism
  - He famously derided James Fennimore Cooper in his article detailing Cooper's *Literary Offenses*.
  - Other authors to fall under Twain's attack were George Eliot, Jane Austen, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- **1869** *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims' Progress* – a travel book which humorously chronicles what Twain called his *Great Pleasure Excursion* on board the chartered vessel *Quaker City* through Europe and the Holy Land with a group of American travellers in 1867.
  - Europeans as the corrupt ones and Americans as the innocents.
- **1876** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* - a novel about a young boy growing up along the Mississippi River, the story is set in the town of "St. Petersburg".
  - *Mischief is good to do*.
  - Adults can read it and feel nostalgic about the past.
  - Violence is outside the city.
  - Very racist
    - The Native-American Joe is a black character.
- **1884** *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* – a novel that outgrew its prequel and became one of the Great American Novels.
  - Among the first in major American literature to be written in the vernacular, characterized by local colour regionalism.
  - Several levels:
    - 1) For children – the narrator is a boy, it's a picaresque novel.
    - 2) A double satire
      - Criticism of the United States,
      - Rejection of the world of adults, of the whole civilization.
    - 3) It's symbolic – the Mississippi River is compared to the past of the United States.
  - Adult figures, except Jim, fail the boy.
  - Aristocrats in the South are presented as idiots
    - Two families (the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons) fight with each other and in the end all the Grangerford males are being shot and killed.
  - Blacks:
    - **Jim**, the widow's slave who runs away,
      - Presented as the innocent, wise and superstitious man
      - He helps Huck and protects him.
  - THE MOST IMPORTANT FRAGMENT:
    - Huck realises Jim broke the law by escaping, and helping the slave is the same as stealing. Heart battle – he writes a letter to the widow about Jim but he cannot send it because Jim is his friend.
      - His conscience was deformed by racism.
    - Huck tells himself "I know I will go to Hell but I will go for Jim." – how he sacrifices his life for his friend (he's not a religious person in fact).
  - Ending: Huck decides not to go back to civilization but to "light to the territory" (Indian Territory).
  - Themes:
    - 1) The search for freedom
    - 2) The failure of adult world
    - 3) The failure of civilization in general
    - 4) Death and violence
    - 5) Appearance and reality → things are not always as they appear
      - Jim is presented as the simple person, he tells Huck he should never touch the skin of a snake because it brings a bad luck, he knows more about nature than Huck (this skin may be simply a living snake).
  - It's a controversial book – encouraging mischiefs, offensive language, not respectful for adults, frequent use of the racial slur "nigger".
  - Huck endangers Jim many times, he leaves him and forgets about him, "the game of rescuing Jim" – Huck is not as good friend as the readers may assume.
- **1889** *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* – a novel about a Yankee engineer from Connecticut who is accidentally transported back in time to the court of King Arthur, where he fools the inhabitants of that time into thinking he is a magician – and soon uses his knowledge of modern

technology to become a “magician” in earnest, stunning the English of the Early Middle Ages with such feats as demolition, fireworks and the shoring up of a holly well. He attempts to modernize the past, but in the end he is unable to prevent the death of Arthur and an interdict against him by the Catholic Church of the time, which grows fearful of his power.

- Twain wrote the book as a burlesque of Romantic notions of chivalry after being inspired by a dream in which he was a knight himself, and severely inconvenienced by the weight and cumbersome nature of his armour.
- *Bringing the civilization = bringing death*
- **1894 *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*** – a novel
  - Three plot lines, which all come together in a murder trial at the novel's end.
  - Pudd'nhead Wilson is a Northerner who comes to the small Missouri town of Dawson's Landing to build a career as a lawyer. Immediately upon his arrival he alienates the townspeople, who don't understand his wit. They give him the nickname “Pudd'nhead” and refuse to give him their legal work.
  - Roxy is a beautiful slave who is only one-sixteenth black. To save her infant son from ever being sold away from her, she switches him with the child of her white master, who looks just like her son and was born on the same day. Her son Chambers, now called “Tom,” grows up as a white man and heir to an estate. Her master's child, Tom, now called “Chambers”, grows up a slave. “Tom” grows into a cruel, cowardly man. His gambling debts lead him, under Roxy's guidance, to rob houses, sell the now-freed Roxy as a slave, and finally to murder his uncle, Judge Driscoll, in a botched robbery attempt.
  - Luigi and Angelo are former sideshow performers. Good-looking and charming, they claim to be Italian twins, heirs of a deposed nobleman. They arrive in Dawson's Landing to rent a room in Widow Cooper's house, claiming they are tired of the bustle of the world. Luigi confesses to Pudd'nhead Wilson, who has read his palm, that he once killed a man who tried to steal a fabulous Indian knife from the brothers. This knife is stolen by “Tom” and used to kill Judge Driscoll.
  - “Tom” escapes disguised as a woman after killing his uncle. The twins are found standing over the body and their bloody knife is on the floor. They are brought to trial for the murder.
  - Rather pessimistic.
  - *“The scheme of every man contains a slave.”*
  - All people are cruel and evil.
  - Twain's criticism of America being greedy.
- **1916 *The Mysterious Stranger*** – a novel that is a serious social commentary by Twain addressing his ideas of the Moral Sense and the “damned human race”. The adventures of Satan, the sinless nephew of the biblical Satan, in an Austrian village in the Middle Ages.
  - Almost everybody is worse than Satan.
  - Solipsism - the theory that the self is the only thing that can be known and verified.
  - The ending does not fit realism.
- **1899 *The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*** – a short fiction about Satan who corrupts an “incorruptible” town.
  - Many critics discuss the town of Hadleyburg as a “microcosm of America,” comparing the activities and personalities of the townsfolk to various features of the American character.
- **Mark Twain and women**
  - He loved them; to him women were beautiful, pure, like a Southern Belle, they were perfect, lovely and boring.
  - Good women characters: extremely boring, too naïve and too sweet.
  - Another type of women characters: older, unmarried, their role was to control men.
  - A man stands for freedom and a woman brings civilization, she cleans and goes to church.
  - *“Either virgins or bitches.”*
- “Satan hasn't a single salaried helper; the Opposition employs a million.”

#### LOCAL COLOUR (REGIONALISM) 1870-1890

- Fiction and poetry that focuses on the characters, dialect, customs, topography, and other features particular to a specific region.
- Form – short story<sup>1</sup>.
- It was not a trend of extremes but it presented average people and their feelings.
- DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A NARRATOR AND CHARACTERS:
  - CHARACTERS – simple people
  - NARRATOR – educated, patronising towards characters, omniscient, 3<sup>rd</sup> person
- **The profession of a writer** after the Civil War

<sup>1</sup> Short story was invented by E.A. Poe and N. Hawthorne.

- A job treated very seriously and professionally
  - 1) Didactic;
  - 2) Written for entertainment;
  - 3) Written for some reason (antislavery, for women, etc.)
- Writing for money
  - There were formulas how to write fast.
  - Dime novels<sup>2</sup>.
  - Louisa May Alcott wrote many dime novels – detective and horror stories.
- **Literary magazines:**
  - The Atlantic Monthly – Boston, Massachusetts, launched in 1857.
  - Harper's Magazine – New York City, launched in 1850.
- *Art for art's sake.*

## 1) WESTERN REGIONAL WRITERS

- Features:
  - Characters: cowboys, gamblers, prostitutes, thieves.
  - Plot: adventure and danger, quite a lot of violence.
  - The most humorous of all regions.
  - Tall tales<sup>3</sup>.
- **Mark Twain 1835-1910**
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Local Colourist
  - **1865** *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* – a humorous story about a gambler who starts training animals, even a frog, in order to teach them tricks.
    - Written in vernacular
- **Bret Harte 1836-1902**
  - Stories about Wild West.
  - Stories are funny and very often sentimental. Characters are colourful.
  - He was against slavery and racism.
  - **1870** *Plain Language from Truthful James (The Heathen Chinee)* – a narrative poem that satirized the anti-Chinese sentiment.
    - Harte called the poem "trash", and "the worst poem I ever wrote, possibly the worst poem anyone ever wrote."
- **Hamlin Garland 1860-1940**
  - **1891** *Main-Travelled Roads* – a collection of short stories set in the "Middle Border," the north-western prairie states of Wisconsin, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota.
    - the hardships of agrarian life, deconstructing the conventional myth of the American prairie while highlighting the economic and social conditions that characterized agricultural communities in the rural Midwest.
    - Vernacular stretched to such a level that the story was unreadable; too artificial.
  - Very realistic and quite pessimistic stories; harshness of living in the country.
  - **CRITICAL THEORY OF VERITISM**
    - Man has been presented with no conclusive evidence lending credence to the existence of a specific deity, or supreme entity and thus has no justification for reaching any kind of conclusions on the nature of such a being other than that it is a benign force.
    - To throw grim truth with the purpose of improving the reality.

## 2) NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL WRITERS

- Features:
  - Characters – mainly women (single, widows)
  - Language – less vernacular, much more accessible; farmers spoke similar to the literal language.
  - Optimistic stories.
  - The life depicted is slow and boring.
  - Tradition of Transcendentalism.
  - Writing about nature.
  - Motifs: matriarchy and female utopia.
  - Gloominess:

<sup>2</sup> Dime novel – a cheap melodramatic or sensational novel, usually sold for ten cents.

<sup>3</sup> Tall tale – an exaggerated, unreliable story.

- Life is difficult – unpleasant climate, bad soil.
  - The residue of puritanism – God is not very kind.
  - The authors are mainly women, because of the Civil War and the discovery of gold in California.
  - **Sarah Orne Jewett 1849-1908**
    - She had the inferiority complex as a writer – “I am the lesser writer.”
    - **1886** *The White Heron* - a story of a young city girl named Sylvia, who came to live with her grandmother in the country. She meets a young ornithologist hunter seeking to find a rare bird he has heard has been spotted in the area. As the story progresses Sylvia is challenged with whether or not she should tell the hunter she saw the bird. She also discovers her passion for country life and her love and values for the animals that inhabit it.
      - An ecological story.
      - Type of matriarchy: women had to be sufficient for each other.
    - **1896** *The Country of the Pointed Firs* – a short story sequence that can be read as a study of the effects of isolation and hardship experienced by the inhabitants of the decaying fishing villages along the Maine coast.
      - Hand-made products are better than the industry-made ones.
      - Matriarchy
      - Tourism: America becomes obsessed with the idea of travelling.
      - Narrated as if by the author herself, a very educated person.
      - Topic: life in the fishing village.
      - Distance between the narrator and the topic.
  - **Mary Wilkins Freeman 1852-1930**
    - Mainly collections of short stories.
    - **1891** *A New England Nun* – the story of Louisa Ellis, a woman who has lived alone for many years. Louisa is somewhat of an eccentric, as she likes to keep her house meticulously clean, wear multiple aprons, and eat from her nicest china every day. Louisa promised Joe Dagget 14 years ago that she would marry him when he returned from his fortune-hunting adventures in Australia, and now that he has returned it is time for her to fulfil her promise. Louisa sees him as a disruption of the life that she has made for herself.
    - Freeman writes mainly for adult women, her stories are uplifting.
    - **1918** *Edgewater People* – A collection of interrelated short stories concerning the town folk of a few small New England villages at the turn of the last century.
      - Mainly about the oppression of women and people living in the country.
      - The story of narrow-mindedness.
      - Hailed as the feminist manifesto.
    - **1891** *The Revolt of 'Mother'* - a short story focusing on a woman who takes a stand against an authoritarian husband.
      - Oppression
      - With a happy ending.
- 3) **SOUTHERN REGIONAL WRITERS**
- Tradition: huge plantations, feudalism, slaves, upholding the values of chivalry, patriotism and honour.
  - Everything connected with the plantation.
  - Almost tropical climate.
  - Frenchmen:
    - **Creoles** – descendants of the French aristocracy, the upper-class.
    - **Acadians/Cajuns** – French farmers and peasants.
  - Theme: love and sensuality.
    - New England never talks about sexuality.
    - Wild West talks about natural phenomena such as prostitution.
  - Religion: mainly Catholic
    - Americans do not trust Catholics; for Catholics the highest authority is Pope not the President, the idea of celibacy and insistence on reproduction.
  - **George Washington Cable 1844-1925**
    - Notable for the realism of his portrayals of Creole life in his native New Orleans, Louisiana.
    - The treatment of racism, mixed-race families and miscegenation<sup>4</sup>.
    - He did not idealize the South.
    - **1879** *Belles Demoiselles Plantation* – a widower with seven daughters wants to sell his plantation and move to the town, he tries to cheat his relative. The Mississippi river floods and Colonel's daughters drown and he loses everything. His Indian relative takes care of him.

<sup>4</sup> Miscegenation - marriage or cohabitation between a man and woman of different races

- **1874** *Tite Poulette* – the subject of racial passing, fair-skinned black “passing” for white, thereby subverting the idea of racial “purity” among Louisiana Creoles.
- **Joel Chandler Harris 1844-1922**
  - led two professional lives:
    - As the editor and journalist known as Joe Harris, he supported a vision of the New South, stressing regional and racial reconciliation after the Reconstruction era.
    - As Joel Chandler Harris, fiction writer and folklorist.
  - **1880** *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* - thirty-four folktales narrated by Uncle Remus, an elderly man living in a cabin on Sally and John Huntington's plantation. His listener is their seven year-old son John, who returns nightly to Uncle Remus's side to hear about the fates of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, Brer Tarrypin, and fellow animals as they enter into contests, pull pranks, and do their best to outwit each other at every encounter.
    - The tales champion the weaker animals over the stronger ones, and range from playful trickery to violence, abuse, and destruction.
    - Brer Rabbit, who is the central character of the tales, resembles the African archetypal trickster figure.
    - Brer Fox, who presents the greatest threat to Brer Rabbit, is suggestive of the dominant white race
    - The tales are followed by a series of plantation proverbs written in dialect that reflect on various aspects of an agricultural lifestyle.
    - Harris also records several plantation songs, which are mostly of a religious nature, in dialect.
- **Charles Waddell Chesnutt 1858-1932**
  - The first African American mainstream writer.
  - He is best known for his novels and short stories exploring complex issues of racial and social identity in the post-Civil War South.
  - He was seven-eighths white, but he identified himself as African American.
  - **1898** *The Conjure Woman* – a collection of seven stories which deal with the racial issues facing the South after the war, often through the comments of the character of Uncle Julius McAdoo. A freed slave tells the stories to a white couple from the North, who are visiting in their search for property.
    - **The** stories are derived from African-American folk tales and include many supernatural occurrences built around hoodoo conjuring traditions.
  - Chesnutt tried to write something more serious about the racial problems.
  - **1900** *The House Behind the Cedars* - The story takes place in the South during the post-Civil War era. It features Rena Walden as a young mulatto woman who leaves home to live with her brother where they can both pass as white. The secret of her identity becomes the main source of conflict when she falls in love with a white aristocrat and he finds out who she really is. The tragedy that ensues as a result of this discovery emphasizes the book's themes of interracial relations and racial identity.
    - **“Tragic mulatto”** - an archetypal mixed-race person (a "mulatto"), who is assumed to be sad, or even suicidal, because they fail to completely fit in the "white world" or the "black world". As such, the "tragic mulatto" is depicted as the victim of the society they live in, a society divided by race.
- **Kate Chopin 1851-1904**
  - She is considered by some to have been a forerunner of feminist authors of the 20th century.
  - The author of short stories and novels.
  - Themes: women's rights and feminism, sensuality, race.
  - **1899** *The Awakening* - set in New Orleans and the Southern Louisiana coast at the end of the nineteenth century, the plot centres around Edna Pontellier and her struggle to reconcile her increasingly unorthodox views on femininity and motherhood with the prevailing social attitudes of the turn-of-the-century South.
    - Scandalous – a rich, good-looking woman, whose husband is very tolerant, is relaxing at the seaside and flirting with men, she fell in love with a young man and left her husband and their children.
    - The feminist points:
      - ii. Not every woman is meant to be a mother.
      - iii. Many women will not feel happy in a “golden cage”.
      - iv. Stress on sex and sexuality – women want to have sex just for fun.
        - Getting into the water and swimming as the symbol of sexuality.
    - Motto: “Power is the ground of all relations.”



- **1894 *The Story of an Hour*** - The title of the short story refers to the time elapsed between the moments at which the protagonist, Louise Mallard, hears that her husband is dead and discovers that he is alive after all.
  - It deals with a female protagonist who feels liberated by the news of her husband's death.
- **1898 *The Storm*** – a short story describing the relationship between Calixta and Alcée which holds a degree of passion absent from their marriages. Calixta is scared of the storm, but Alcée's calmness relaxes her.
  - A story of sexuality, a topic not publicly discussed in 1898.
- **1892 *Désirée's Baby*** - Désirée is the adopted daughter of Monsieur and Madame Valmondé who are wealthy Creoles in Louisiana. She is courted by another wealthy, well-known and respected son of a Creole family, Armand. They appear very devoted to one another and eventually have a child. Eventually they realize that the baby's skin is the same color as a quadroon (one-quarter African) slave boy—the baby is not white. Because of Désirée's unknown roots, Armand immediately assumes that she is part black although Désirée tries to deny the accusation. Madame Valmondé suggests that Désirée and the baby return to the Valmondé estate. Désirée then takes the child and walks off into a bayou, never to be seen again. Armand then proceeds to burn all of Désirée's belongings, even all of the letters that she had sent him during their courtship. With this bundle of letters is also one written from his mother to his father, revealing that Armand is, in fact, the one who is part black.

<b>W. E. B. Du Bois</b> <b>1868-1963</b>	<b>Booker T. Washington</b> <b>1856-1915</b>
an American sociologist, historian, civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, author and editor.	an African-American educator, author, orator, and advisor to Republican presidents. He was the dominant leader in the African-American community in the United States from 1890 to 1915.
<b>Classical educational programme</b>	<b>Industrial educational programme</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blacks should get the same education as the whites.</li> <li>▪ equality with whites was of the utmost importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the best way for blacks to stabilize their future was to make themselves an indispensable faction of society by providing a necessity</li> <li>▪ education that would keep blacks "down on the farm"</li> </ul>

**BLACK WRITERS:**

- Phillis Wheatley – slave narratives, *To His Excellency General Washington*
- Frederick Douglass – an autobiography, *Narrative of the Life...*
- W.E.B. Du Bois – a collection of the essays, *The Souls of Black Folk*
- Booker T. Washington – *Up from Slavery* and *The Future of the American Negro*
- Charles W. Chesnutt – the collection of stories, *The Conjure Woman*

**FOR THE EXAM**

- **The Southern Belle** - an archetype for a young woman of the American Deep South's upper class.
- **Plantation Ideal**
- **The black stereotypes:**
  - **The Contented Slave** - a black person so lazily happy with his lot that he saw no reason for struggle.
  - **The Wretched Freeman** - the embodiment of the slavery supporter's argument that a slave was never intended to be free. Freedom itself makes him miserable, and when freed, he desires nothing so much as to once again be a slave.
  - **The Comic Negro** - more of a caricature, with his personal and physical traits grossly exaggerated for the sake of humour, i.e. Topsy from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
  - **The Tragic Mulatto** - Usually female, she has so many white ancestors she could "pass" for white.
  - **The Local Colour Negro** - characters were treated as scenery, there only to give flavour and colour to the setting of a story.
  - **The Exotic Primitive** - embodies all the clichés about the "primitive African." Lust, sexual prowess, a wildly uncontrolled desire for drinking and drugs and often a lifestyle of casual violence mark this character.
  - **The Brute Negro** - manipulated and controlled by cunning Yankee carpetbaggers, became the literary repository of everything evil, i.e. Nat Turner.

**FEMINIST INCLINATIONS:****Elizabeth Stuart Phelps 1844-1919**

She was a great advocate for social reform, temperance, and the emancipation of women. She was also involved in clothing reform for women, urging them to burn their corsets in 1874. She wrote short stories and novels, several utopias about heaven and afterlife.

- **1868** *The Gates Ajar* – a religious novel that represents heaven as being similar to that of earth.
- **1872** *The Story of Avis* - a work that describes a woman's struggle to balance her married life and expected domestic duties with her passion to become a painter.
  - **Künstlerroman** - a narrative about an artist's growth to maturity; it may be classified as a specific sub-genre of Bildungsroman<sup>5</sup>; such a work, usually a novel, tends to depict the conflicts of a sensitive youth against the values of a bourgeois society of his or her time.

**Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1860-1935**

A prominent American sociologist, novelist, writer of short stories, poetry, and nonfiction, and a lecturer for social reform. She was a utopian feminist during a time when her accomplishments were exceptional for women, and she served as a role model for future generations of feminists because of her unorthodox concepts and lifestyle.

- **1898** *Women and Economics* – a sociological feminist work with a few dominant themes: the transformation of marriage, the family, and the home, with her central argument, “the economic independence and specialization of women as essential to the improvement of marriage, motherhood, domestic industry, and racial improvement.”
- Complete emancipation of women.
- **1892** *The Yellow Wallpaper* – a short story which is a collection of journal entries written by a woman whose physician husband has confined her to the upstairs bedroom of a house he has rented for the summer. She is forbidden from working, and has to hide her journal from him, so she can recuperate from what he calls a “temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency,” a diagnosis common to women in the post-natal period. The windows of the room are barred, and there is a gate across the top of the stairs, allowing her husband to control her access to the rest of the house. The story depicts the effect of confinement on the narrator's mental health, and her descent into psychosis. With nothing to stimulate her, she becomes obsessed by the pattern and colour of the wallpaper.
  - “Rest cure” – mainly prescribed by Dr Silas Weir Mitchell, a medical treatment involving a period of consistent (day and night) recumbence in bed.
  - The short story can be treated as a gothic horror story for its treatment of madness and powerlessness
  - There are few humorous moments.
  - It can be also treated from the solipsistic<sup>6</sup> point of view.
- **1915** *Herland* – a utopian novel describing an isolated society composed entirely of women who reproduce via parthenogenesis<sup>7</sup>. The result is an ideal social order, free of war, conflict and domination.
  - A severe undercurrent of racism – Gilman consistently refers to the people living in the valleys below Herland as “savages” and presents no evidence to substantiate this claim.
  - A praise for eugenics – character “flaws” can be bred out of humanity as Gilman repeatedly states that only the most virtuous women are allowed to enjoy the gift of maternity.

**NATURALISM 1870's – 1950's**

- The term introduced by the French writer, Émile Zola (1840-1902), who emphasised particularly the effect of heredity and environment on human nature and action.
- An elaboration of realism; realism with a particular view of humanity plus a specific method of writing.
- The literary trend was influenced by the development in natural science and psychology:
  - i) DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION (biology);
    - Heredity – the transmission from one generation to another of genetic factors that determine individual characteristics.

<sup>5</sup> Bildungsroman - A novel whose principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually youthful main character.

<sup>6</sup> Solipsistic - the theory that only the self exists, or can be proved to exist.

<sup>7</sup> Parthenogenesis - asexual reproduction.

- ii) SOCIOLOGY REPRESENTED BY KARL MARX showing the consequences of the Industrial Revolution;
  - Environment.
- iii) FREUD'S THEORY ON PSYCHOLOGY (medicine and psychology) – human being depends on their instincts.
- Humans are not responsible for their actions.
  - INCIDENT → many things happen that are scientifically proven but we cannot control them.
- DETERMINISM → all events, including human actions and choices, are fully determined by preceding events and states of affairs, and so that freedom of choice is illusory.
- Life is not determined by God; for naturalists God does not exist, it is a purely atheistic trend.
- Nature is an omnipotent being.
- Humans are just animals.
- OBJECTIVISM
  - According to Zola, writer is the objective experimenter who observes and describes what they see.
- PESSIMISM
  - (a) Society is not ruled by reason but by instincts.
  - (b) There's no moral progress.
  - (c) Human animal does not have any dilemmas (they lead to despair).
  - (d) Science will not bring moral comfort.
  - (e) Science shows how impotent human beings are.
  - (f) God is dead.
  - (g) Nature is omnipotent.
  - (h) Man is an animal on a low step of evolution.
  - (i) Naturalists do not promise the world will be better, they do not sentimentalize.
- Criteria for writing:
  - (a) No non-scientific things, only ones that can be measured.
  - (b) Human instincts (natural forces): hunger, fear, physical drives, etc.
  - (c) Natural forces can be examined by writers but cannot be controlled by a person.
  - (d) A writer has to be extremely objective.
  - (e) A writer must have amoral attitude.
  - (f) Texts should be pessimistic.
  - (g) Characters of strong animistic nature usually win.
  - (h) There is no human dignity in a mechanical world.
  - Writers pretend to be like scientist and write long pseudo-scientific passages.

	NATURALISM	OTHER TRENDS
RELIGION	God does <u>not</u> exist, Nature takes God's place	<u>PURITANISM</u> : God despises you <u>TRANSCENDENTALISM</u> : God loves you, Nature does not care if you live or not <u>REALISM</u> : God exists but it does not matter
THEMES	preferably horrible (war, starvation, prostitution, sexual deviations)	<u>REALISM</u> : mostly pleasant, no extremes
PHILOSOPHY	particular philosophy	<u>REALISM</u> : does not impose any philosophy on a writer
MORALITY	amoral	<u>REALISM</u> : has a moral but is <u>not moralistic</u>

### THREE TYPES OF NATURALISTS:

- A) **HARD NATURALISTS (DETERMINISTS)** – we cannot change our fate, nothing is in our power, very cynical.
  - Ambrose Bierce
  - Stephen Crane
  - Theodore Dreiser
- B) **SOFT NATURALISTS (MELIORISTS<sup>8</sup>)** – there is some hope that the world may improve somehow.

<sup>8</sup> Meliorism - the belief that improvement of society depends on human effort.

- Hamlin Garland\* (*veritism*)
- Frank Norris
- Jack London

#### C) OTHER WRITERS OF NATURALISTIC TENDENCIES

- Kate Chopin
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- Upton Sinclair
- John Steinbeck
- Ernest Hemingway
- Norman Mailer

#### **Frank Norris 1870-1902**

- Pioneer of American naturalism.
- Major themes: demoralising effect of technology on human fate, human greed, depravity, suffering.
- **1899** *McTeague* – the story of a couple's courtship and marriage, and their subsequent descent into poverty, violence and finally murder as the result of jealousy and avarice.
  - Alcoholic bestiality
  - A man turning into an animal.

#### **Ambrose Bierce 1842-1914?**

An American editorialist, journalist, short story writer, fabulist, and satirist. His vehemence as a critic, his motto "Nothing matters" and the sardonic view of human nature that informed his work all earned him the nickname "Bitter Bierce." Bierce employed a distinctive style of writing, especially in his stories. His style often embraces an abrupt beginning, dark imagery, vague references to time, limited descriptions, impossible events and the theme of war.

In 1913, Bierce travelled to Mexico to gain first-hand experience of the Mexican Revolution. While traveling with rebel troops, he disappeared without a trace.

- **1890** *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* – a short story which is set during the Civil War, it is famous for its irregular time sequence and twist ending.
- **1906** *The Devil's Dictionary* – a satirical lexicon which offers reinterpretations of terms in the English language, lampooning cant and political doublespeak, as well as other aspects of human foolishness and frailty<sup>9</sup>.
  - *'Aborigenes – persons of little worth found cumbering<sup>10</sup> the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.'*

#### **Theodore Dreiser 1871-1945**

An American novelist and journalist of the naturalist school. His novels often featured main characters who succeeded at their objectives despite a lack of a firm moral code, and literary situations that more closely resemble studies of nature than tales of choice and agency. He was interested in social problems.

- **1900** *Sister Carrie* – a novel about a young country girl, Carrie Meeber, who moves to the big city where she starts realizing her own American Dream, first she is seduced by a commercial traveller and then by a restaurant manager. She moves from one relationship to another, but eventually she achieves success as an actress. It has been called the "greatest of all American urban novels."
  - The destructive impact of a modern city on human personality;
  - *'The fittest will survive'*
  - She is not punished for her immorality.
- **1925** *An American Tragedy* – a novel about Clyde Griffiths, a poor worker, who decides to get rid of his pregnant lover that stands in his way to marrying an elegant Sondra Finchley. He takes Roberta, his lover, on a boat trip. She accidentally drowns. Clyde is convicted and executed for murdering her.
  - Based on a real event of Chester Gillette and Grace Brown.
  - A study of crime and the dangers of the American Dream, the effects of urbanisation, modernisation and alienation; contrast between the glittering lives of the rich and the drab existence of the poor.
  - The accident determines the character's life.

#### **Stephen Crane 1871-1900**

He was very cynical, he lost hope that readers would be interested in higher ideals. Crane was one of the first naturalists. Crane's writing is characterized by vivid intensity, distinctive dialects, and irony. Common themes involve fear, spiritual crises and social isolation.

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<sup>9</sup> Frailty – moral weakness.

<sup>10</sup> To cumber – to obstruct or hinder.

- **1893 *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*** – a novella that centres around Maggie, a young girl who from the Bowery who is driven to unfortunate circumstances by poverty and solitude.
  - Exaggerated text.
  - Cruel and violent world.
- **1897 *The Open Boat*** – a short story based on Crane's experience of surviving a shipwreck off the coast of Florida earlier that year while traveling to Cuba to work as a newspaper correspondent. Crane was stranded at sea for thirty hours when his ship, the SS *Commodore*, sank after hitting a sandbar. He and three other men were forced to navigate their way to shore in a small boat; one of the men, an oiler named Billie Higgins, drowned after the boat overturned.
  - The story is told from the point of view of an anonymous correspondent
  - The use of imagery, irony, symbolism, and the exploration of such themes as survival, solidarity, and the conflict between man and nature.
  - It's neither sentimental nor violent.
  - *Nature has become flatly indifferent* – men watch for the signs if they survive but nature doesn't care.
- **1895 *The Red Badge of Courage*** – a war novel that is taking place during the American Civil War, the story is about a young private of the Union Army, Henry Fleming, who flees from the field of battle. Overcome with shame, he longs for a wound—a "red badge of courage"—to counteract his cowardice. When his regiment once again faces the enemy, Henry acts as standard-bearer.
  - The reader has to know the American history very well in order to know that the story takes place during the Civil War, there are only some hints.
  - Although Crane was born after the war, and had not at the time experienced battle first-hand, the novel is known for its realism.
  - The novel is known for its distinctive style, which includes realistic battle sequences as well as the repeated use of colour imagery, and ironic tone.
  - maturation, heroism, cowardice, and the indifference of nature
  - No sadistic scenes, the war is described without any emotions.
  - No moral;
  - Animal imagery, animalistic behaviour of the characters.
  - The body is not purely naturalistic, there are some additions:
    - Impressionism
      - Plenty of colour
      - Visions are not realistic
      - Describing scenes through the individual's eyes
      - Subjectivity
    - Symbolism
      - *Flag* meaning something important for the soldiers but in fact it's only a piece of material.
      - *Christ* – Jim Conklin (J.C. = Jesus Christ) dies of a wound in his side, his death resurrected the courage of the main character.
    - Bildungsroman (a character learns something)
      - Nothing really changes in the protagonist's mentality.

## MUCKRAKERS

- Theodore Roosevelt referred to this term in his 1906 speech;
  - *'There is filth on the floor, and it must be scraped up with the muck rake; and there are times and places where this service is the most needed of all the services that can be performed. But the man who never does anything else, who never thinks or speaks or writes, save of his feats with the muck rake, speedily becomes, not a help but one of the most potent forces for evil.'*
- The muckrakers provided detailed, accurate journalistic accounts of the political and economic corruption and social hardships caused by the power of big business in a rapidly industrializing United States.
- The muckrakers' work grew out of the yellow journalism of the 1890s, which whetted the public appetite for news arrestingly presented, and out of popular magazines, especially those established by S.S. McClure, Frank A. Munsey, and Peter F. Collier.
- articles critical of political corruption, industrial monopolies, and fraudulent business practices rallied journalists, novelists, and reformers of all sorts to sharpen their criticism of American society.

## Upton Sinclair 1878-1968

A one-time candidate for governor of California who wrote close to one hundred books in many genres. He achieved popularity in the first half of the twentieth century, acquiring particular fame for his classic muckraking novel *The Jungle*.

- **1906 *The Jungle*** – Sinclair wrote the novel with the intent to portray the lives of Lithuanian immigrants in the United States. However, readers were more concerned with the large portion of the book pertaining to the bad practices and corruption of the American meatpacking industry during the early 20th century, and the book is now often interpreted and taught as a journalist's account of the poor working conditions in the industry.
  - poverty, the absence of social programs, unpleasant living and working conditions, and the hopelessness prevalent among the working class, which is contrasted with the deeply-rooted corruption on the part of those in power, child labour, abuse.
  - Sinclair first intended to expose "the inferno of exploitation [of the typical American factory worker at the turn of the 20th Century]," but the reading public, instead, fixated on food safety as the novel's most pressing issue.
  - Some pleasant moments, so there's no too much horror.
  - The conditions in the factories were horrible and disgusting – a worker slipped and fell into the vessel for making lard, the managers made a lard of his body and sold it.
  - Huge influence:
    - Germany stopped importing American meat
    - The Food Inspection Act
    - The Meat Act
  - In a way it's symbolic – the slaughtered animals' fate is the same as the workers' fate.
  - '*I aimed at the public's head, I hit the public's stomach.*'
  - A static of oppression; the story starts with something awful and the later events are even more terrible.
  - Nothing is pure, everything is polluted.
  - SOCIAL DARWINISM – the strongest survive, life as a jungle

### Jack London 1876-1916

A pioneer in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction and was one of the first fiction writers to obtain worldwide celebrity and a large fortune from his fiction alone.

- **1903 *The Call of the Wild*** – the novel takes place in the extreme conditions of the Yukon during the 19th-century Klondike Gold Rush, where strong sled dogs were in high demand. After Buck, a domesticated dog, is snatched from a pastoral ranch in California, he is sold into a brutal life as a sled dog. The novella details Buck's struggle to adjust and survive the cruel treatment he receives from humans, other dogs, and nature. He eventually sheds the veneer of civilization altogether and instead relies on primordial instincts and the lessons he has learned to become a respected and feared leader in the wild.
- **1906 *White Fang*** – the novel takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the 19th-century, and details a wild wolf dog's journey to domestication.
  - Much of the novel is written from the view-point of his canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and how they view humans.
  - The violent world of wild animals and the equally violent world of humans.
  - Morality and redemption.
- Animals are protagonists.
- Stories for teenagers.
- It's not melodramatic.
- London is one of the meliorists.
- He was leaning towards socialism.

### INTELLECTUALS; INTERNATIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL, "GREAT REALIST NOVEL"

#### Henry Adams 1838-1918

An American journalist, historian, academic and novelist. Both his paternal grandfather, John Quincy Adams, and great grandfather, John Adams, one of the most prominent among the Founding Fathers, had been U.S. Presidents, his maternal grandfather was a millionaire, and another great grandfather, Nathaniel Gorham, signed the Constitution.

- On December 6, 1885, his wife, Clover, committed suicide by drinking potassium cyanide. Her death has been attributed to depression over her father's death. Following her death Adams took up a restless life as a globetrotter, traveling extensively, spending summers in Paris and winters in Washington. His mental health went down, he became pessimistic and depressed.
- **1900** Adams saw the Centennial Exposition in Paris
  - Pessimistically influenced by the dynamo – a symbol of technology that someday will control us, it was the triumph of force over human will.
- **1904 *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*** – an extended essay with a subtitle *A Study of Thirteenth-Century Unity*.

- A description of the medieval worldview as reflected in its cathedrals, which he believed expressed “an emotion, the deepest man ever felt—the struggle of his own littleness to grasp the infinite.”
- Drawn to the ideological unity expressed in Roman Catholicism and symbolized by the Virgin Mary;
- He contrasted this coherence with the uncertainties of the 20th century.
- **1907 *The Education of Henry Adams***- an autobiographical work that is Considered to be one of the most distinguished examples of the genre, the ***Education*** combines autobiography, bildungsroman, and critical evaluation of an age.
  - *The Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity*.
  - Life is chaos and there is no logic; if we think that sth is logical, then it's a trap of our mind.
  - The work was published when America was at the strongest.
  - Its chapter entitled *The Dynamo and the Virgin* contrasts the Virgin Mary, the unifying force acting on the European Middle Ages, with the dynamo, as representative of the forces of technology and industry acting upon civilization in the early 20th century. Adams marks the destruction of the human values that supported the achievements of his forebears and fears the future age driven by corruption and greed.
    - There is more profit in worshipping the simplicity of Virgin Mary than the chaotic dynamo.
    - God stands for simplicity, Satan stands for complexity.
- Adams was unhappy for the rest of his life, he disliked almost everything that surrounded him. He didn't believe life is still worth living.

### **William Dean Howells 1837-1920**

An American realist author and literary critic, nicknamed “The Dean of American Letters”, he was particularly known for his tenure as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* as well as his own prolific writings.

- Important figure among American intellectualists.
- Howell was one of those who introduced realism; he disliked sentimentalism, romantic and gothic fiction.
- Naturalism was too extreme for him; regular unexciting realism was the best.
- Howells helped Stephen Crane with his career, he noticed Emily Dickinson and Herman Melville after many years of their disappearance.
- One of the most eminent critics, who encouraged others to write.
- Anti-imperialism, anti-racism, feminist, liberal-minded.
- He was aware of the fact that his novels were not the best. He always agreed with criticism.
- He never wrote about sex;
  - Sinclair Lewis: “Mr Howells was one of the gentlest, sweetest, and most honest of men, but he had the code of a pious old maid whose greatest delight was to have tea at the vicarage. He abhorred not only profanity and obscenity but all of what H.G. Wells has called «the jolly coarseness of life». In his fantastic vision of life, which he innocently conceived to be realistic, farmers, and seamen, and factory hands might exist, but the farmer must never be covered with muck, the seaman must never roll out bawdy chanteys, the factory hand must be thankful to his good kind employer, and all of them must long for the opportunity to visit Florence and smile gently at the quaintness of the beggars.”
  - “Jane Austen of American literature”
- **Themes:**
  - Comedy of manners
  - Analysing characters in social situations
  - Aristocrats vs. nouveaux riche
- **Characters:**
  - Almost never great heroes; average people.
  - The psychology of his characters is decent but not too great.
- Howell is never extreme; passions always controlled, he hates writing about disasters, he avoids the romantic attitude to his characters.
- The scrupulous descriptions of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century life.
- Howells sided with the proletariat, he may be considered as a socialist.
- **1882 *A Modern Instance*** – the story of the deterioration of a once loving marriage under the influence of capitalistic greed.
- **1885 *The Rise of Silas Lapham*** – The story follows the materialistic rise of Silas Lapham from rags to riches, and his ensuing moral susceptibility. Silas earns a fortune in the paint business, but he lacks social standards, which he tries to attain through his daughter's marriage into the aristocratic Corey family. Silas's morality does not fail him. He loses his money but makes the right moral decision when his partner proposes the unethical selling of the mills to English settlers.

- **1886** "*Indian Summer*" – international novel about middle-aged bachelor Theodore Colville's romantic involvement with two women, one his own age and the other much younger.

#### THE JAMES FAMILY

##### **Henry James Sr. 1811-1882**

One of the best-known intellectuals in mid-19th-century America, a philosophical theologian and adherent of Neo-Christianity.

##### **William James 1842-1910**

American philosopher and psychologist, a leader of the philosophical movement of Pragmatism and of the psychological movement of functionalism.

- PRAGMATISM - based on the principle that the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies, and proposals are the criteria of their merit. It stresses the priority of action over doctrine, of experience over fixed principles, and it holds that ideas borrow their meanings from their consequences and their truths from their verification. Thus, ideas are essentially instruments and plans of action.
- **1902** *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* – lectures on the nature of religion and the neglect of science.
  - Proposition of value versus existential judgement;
  - Reality versus symbols of reality.

##### **Alice James 1848-1892**

Known mainly for the posthumously published diary that she kept in her final years, she also has written some letters that were published.

- In 1888, twenty years after James was "overwhelmed by violent turns of hysteria" she wrote in her diary that she was both suicidal and homicidal. She was struggling with the urge to kill her father.

##### **Henry James 1843-1916**

James alternated between America and Europe for the first 20 years of his life, after which he settled in England, becoming a British subject in 1915, one year before his death. He is primarily known for the series of novels in which he portrays the encounter of Americans with Europe and Europeans. His method of writing from the point of view of a character within a tale allows him to explore issues related to consciousness and perception, and his style in later works has been compared to impressionist painting.

#### THE EARLY PHASE

Concentrated on the contrast between Europe and America. The style of these novels is generally straightforward and, though personally characteristic, well within the norms of 19th century fiction.

- **1877** *The American* – an uneasy combination of social comedy and melodrama concerning the adventures and misadventures of Christopher Newman, an essentially good-hearted but rather gauche American businessman on his first tour of Europe. Newman is looking for a world different from the simple, harsh realities of 19th century American business. He encounters both the beauty and the ugliness of Europe, and learns not to take either for granted. The core of the novel concerns Newman's courtship of a young widow from an aristocratic Parisian family.
  - He is good and innocent but completely helpless.
- **1878** *The Europeans: A Sketch* - essentially a comedy contrasting the behaviour and attitudes of two visitors from Europe with those of their relatives living in the 'new' world of New England.
- **1878** *Daisy Miller* - portrays the courtship of the beautiful American girl Daisy Miller by Winterbourne, a sophisticated compatriot of hers. His pursuit of her is hampered by her own flirtatiousness, which is frowned upon by the other expatriates they meet in Switzerland and Italy.
  - At the end she dies of a 'Roman Fever', she is punished → this motif brought a lot of criticism, it scandalised many Americans who went to Europe.
  - She break the rules and does as she wants, she never behaves as she should.
- **1880** *Washington Square* – a structurally simple tragicomedy that recounts the conflict between a dull but sweet daughter and her brilliant, domineering father. The plot of the novel is based upon a true story told to James by his close friend, British actress Fanny Kemble.

#### THE MIDDLE PHASE

James began to use the methods of alternating "picture" and dramatic scene, close adherence to a given angle of vision, a withholding of information from the reader, making available to him only that which the characters see. The subjects of this period are the developing consciousness and moral education of children—in reality James's old international theme of innocence in a corrupting world, transferred to the English setting.

- **1881** *The Portrait of a Lady* - the story of a spirited young American woman, Isabel Archer, who "affronts her destiny" and finds it overwhelming. She inherits a large amount of money and subsequently becomes the victim of Machiavellian scheming by two American expatriates. Like many of James's novels, it is set in Europe, mostly England and Italy.
  - Themes of personal freedom, responsibility, and betrayal.
  - "*My clothes don't matter, it's me who matters.*"



- **1886 *The Bostonians*** - This bittersweet tragicomedy centres on an odd triangle of characters: Basil Ransom, a political conservative from Mississippi; Olive Chancellor, Ransom's cousin and a Boston feminist; and Verena Tarrant, a pretty, young protégée of Olive's in the feminist movement. The storyline concerns the struggle between Ransom and Olive for Verena's allegiance and affection, though the novel also includes a wide panorama of political activists, newspaper people, and quirky eccentrics.
  - It is a devious novel.
  - James criticises both sides, men and women.
- **1898 *The Turn of the Screw*** - a ghost story told mostly through the journal of a governess and depicts her struggle to save her two young charges from the demonic influence of the eerie apparitions of two former servants in the household.

#### THE LATE PHASE (psychological realism)

James pointed the way for the 20th-century novel. He ended by leaving his stage comparatively bare, and showing a small group of characters in a tense situation, with a retrospective working out, through multiple angles of vision, of their drama. In addition to these technical devices he resorted to an increasingly allusive prose style, which became dense and charged with symbolic imagery.

- **1903 *The Beast in the Jungle*** – short story that concerns John Marcher, a neurotic egoist obsessed with the lurking feeling that something incredible is to happen to him. This impending fate has a predatory quality, like “a crouching beast in the jungle.” Consumed with anticipation and dread, Marcher is unable to reciprocate the love of his long-suffering companion, May Bartram. She comes to see his fate but is unable to make him understand it before she dies. While visiting her grave one year later, Marcher suddenly realizes that his terrible fate was precisely his inability to comprehend her love for him.
- **1902 *The Wings of the Dove*** - novel tells the story of Milly Theale, an American heiress stricken with a serious disease, and her impact on the people around her. Some of these people befriend Milly with honourable motives, while others are more self-interested.
- **1903 *The Ambassadors*** – dark comedy follows the trip of protagonist Lewis Lambert Strether to Europe in pursuit of Chad, his widowed fiancée's supposedly wayward son; he is to bring the young man back to the family business, but he encounters unexpected complications.
  - The third-person narrative is told exclusively from Strether's point of view.
- **1904 *The Golden Bowl*** – set in England, this complex, intense study of marriage and adultery completes what some critics have called the “major phase” of James’ career. *The Golden Bowl* explores the tangle of interrelationships between a father and daughter and their respective spouses.
  - Focuses deeply and almost exclusively on the consciousness of the central characters, with sometimes obsessive detail but also with powerful insight.
  - The title is a quotation from Ecclesiastes 12:6, “...or the golden bowl be broken ...then shall the dust return to the earth as it was”.
- **HENRY JAMES AS A LITERARY CRITIC**
  - James was one of the most important literary critics in the history of the novel.
- **1879 *Hawthorne*** - an insightful study of James' great predecessor, Nathaniel Hawthorne. James gave extended consideration to each of Hawthorne's novels and a selection of his short stories. He also reviewed Hawthorne's life and some of his nonfiction. The book became somewhat controversial for a famous section where James enumerated the items of novelistic interest he thought were absent from American life.
- **1888 *The Art of Fiction*** - he argued against rigid proscriptions on the novelist's choice of subject and method of treatment. He maintained that the widest possible freedom in content and approach would help ensure narrative fiction's continued vitality.
- The division of great masters and lesser writers.
- **PSYCHOLOGY**
  - (a) Close to foreshadowing the stream of consciousness;
    - i. Only behaviour and thoughts;
    - ii. The unconsciousness does not matter.
  - (b) Deals with the workings of the mind.
  - (c) Introduces the ‘point of view narration’
    - Narrator enters the mind of character and speaks of their thoughts in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person narration.
  - (d) Difficult style reflects the difficult content;
    - i. His style is based on the assumption that his reader is very well educated and has a lot of free time to spend on reading.
  - (e) Can be very funny but it is hard to notice that because his writings are too demanding and tiresome.
- There are some hints that modernism is coming.
- The cult of style, the use of psychology and irony.

- **James as a realist:**
  - He does not deal with metaphysics and God.
  - No allegories and symbols.
  - He is not didactic.
- James was mostly criticised for:
  - Dealing only with the people who had money.
  - He obviously disliked America; American themes bored him, the real material for writing was in Europe.

### **Edith Wharton 1862-1937**

She was best known for her stories and novels about the upper-class society into which she was born.

- One of the first women in America that were rated so highly;
  - She graduated from Yale.
  - 1921 *The Age of Innocence* won the Pulitzer Prize for literature and it made her the first woman to win the award.
- She and Henry James were close friends, they compared their writings with each other.
- **Similarities with Henry James's writing:**
  - Theme: the upper class, social relations.
  - Devotion to the craft of style.
- She is quite sensual, the theme of sexual relations is present in her writings, and she is not prude.
- She wrote pornography under her pen name.
  - This subject was extremely popular, even the child pornography.
- **1905 *The House of Mirth*** – written in the style of a novel of manners, set against the backdrop of the 1890s New York ruling class, it is a text considered to be part of American literary naturalism. Wharton places her tragic heroine, Lily Bart, in a society that she describes as a "hot-house of traditions and conventions."
  - The title derives from Ecclesiastes 7:4: *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*
  - *Money is important.*
  - Very naturalistic – social relations as a jungle.
  - Everyone talks about morality but real moral standards do not exist; no moral standards but respectability.
- **1911 *Ethan Frome*** – exploits the grimmer possibilities of the New England farm life she observed from her home in Lenox, Massachusetts. The protagonist, the farmer Ethan Frome, is married to a whining hypochondriac but falls in love with her cousin, Mattie. As she is forced to leave his household, Frome tries to end their dilemma by steering their bobsled into a tree, but he ends up only crippling Mattie for life. They spend the rest of their miserable lives together with his wife on the farm.
- **1916 *Summer*** – the sexual awakening of its protagonist, Charity Royall, and her cruel treatment by the father of her child.
  - A seduction novel – a narrow-minded woman is seduced by a man.
  - It can be looked at from many angles.
- **1920 *The Age of Innocence*** – the novel centres on an upper-class couple's impending marriage, and the introduction of a woman plagued by a scandal whose presence threatens their happiness.
  - It questions the assumption and morals of 1870s' New York society.
  - The woman, Ellen, has returned to New York after scandalously separating herself from a bad marriage to a Polish count.
  - *We don't talk about such matters* – nobody will listen about her problems, it's below the lady's matters.
    - Hypocrisy.
  - Ellen Olenska has an affair, her lover won't marry a divorced woman, he chooses a younger woman. Ellen goes to Europe. Newland's wife dies after many years, he and his son are in Paris. The son, learning that his mother's cousin, Ellen, lives there, has arranged to visit her. On arriving outside the apartment building, Newland sends up his son alone to meet Ellen, while he waits outside watching the balcony of her apartment. He considers going up, but in the end decides not to.
  - Themes: the Victorian society viewed with ironic detachment.
  - Satire against middle and upper classes.
  - Characters are shown from naturalistic perspective.
  - Passion which has to be controlled, spontaneity and convention.
  - Stability and tradition as things that are very important.
  - Women as decoration for a house.
  - Material world is extremely important.

- Wharton is ambiguous – she detests hypocrisy but tradition forms the skeleton of society.
- The root of her art – prudish, hypocritical, but it's hard to give it up, it's so beautiful.

## MODERNISM (late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

### Historical background:

- America joined WWI in 1917.
  - *Wilson kept us out of war.*
  - At the end of the war, Wilson did not want to charge Germany completely.
    - The period of American isolationism 1920-1930s
- Several novels written about WWI
  - Very idealistic, propaganda against Germany,
  - Novels about Americans being manipulated and cheated.
- Important facts
  - American prosperity
  - 1927 commercial flight New York – Boston,
  - 1920 vote for women,
  - Urban population exceeded the rural one,
  - Electrical plants, radio stations, technology,
  - 1919-1933 prohibition mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution
  - 1923 Gov. John C. Walton put Oklahoma under martial law because of the Ku Klux Klan,
  - 1925 biology teacher was arrested for teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution,
  - 1929 the stock market crash,
  - The decade of poverty,
  - 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt became a president.

## LITERARY MODERNISM

- (1) INNOVATIONS – new literary forms, style, being different by all means.
- (2) THE CULT OF STYLE – as important as content.
- (3) REACTION AGAINST VICTORIANISM:
  - Hatred of sentimentality,
  - Everything has to be detached,
  - Importance of sex and eroticism in literature. If there's no sex described, the book is not open and it's bad.
- (4) INFLUENCE OF POLITICS
  - (a) INTERNATIONALISM
  - (b) REGIONALISM – following the idea of isolationism.
- 1920s in European literature:
  - Marcel Proust *Remembrance of Things Past* (1927)
  - T.S. Eliot *The Waste Land* (1922)
  - James Joyce *Ulysses* (1922)
  - Thomas Mann *The Magic Mountain* (1924)
  - Franz Kafka *The Trial* (1925), *The Castle* (1926), *Amerika* (1927)
- Books had to be sad, pessimistic and gloomy, there was the necessity of showing the darkest side of life.
- The literature of the **avant-garde**: difficult, understood only with the help of critical translation.
- Experiencing the downfall ~the Fireside Poets (H.W. Longfellow, W.C. Bryant, J.R. Lowell).
- Decent literature was too clean.
- The American Sentimentalists were forgotten; Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson were rediscovered.
- 1921 the formation of the International PEN Club – a worldwide association of writers.
- 1922 the first issue of the Reader's Digest Condensed novels.
- 1922 the US Post Office held any copies of James Joyce's *Ulysses* it found and had them burned.

## Ezra Pound 1885-1972

- One of the most controversial poets.
- He was regarded as a chauvinist.
- Pound was both: a Classicist and the greatest innovator.
  - The motto of the American Modernism: *Make it new!*
- 1908-1920 Pound lived in London.
- Pound proposed many innovations:
  - (a) IMAGISM (1912) – a movement that favoured precision of imagery and clear, sharp language. It rejected the sentiment and discursiveness typical of Romantic and Victorian poetry.

- You cannot express any abstract notions such as love and beauty, everything has to be expressed by concrete images and pictures.
  - The reader has to guess through these pictures what the writer's talking about.
  - **1917** *The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter* – a love poem about a woman who waits for her husband, how she misses and loves him.
    - No straightforward information, there's a hint that he also loves her.
  - Poetry must be liberated from any trace of sentimentality, no superfluous words, the poem should be short.
  - Poetry must be hard and have clear edges.
  - **1914** *Des Imagistes* – the first anthology of Imagism.
  - Women were ashamed to be women because of their sentimentality.
- (b) VORTICISM (1914)
- A poem that expresses movement.
  - Dynamic, forceful poems.
  - **1915** *The Cantos* – a long incomplete poem in 120 sections, each of which is a canto.
    - It meant to be a modern epic.
    - Views on history, art, literature, economy.
    - Theme: degeneration and materialism in Modern Times.
- (c) SEQUENCES
- It's a type of a poem that have one common scene, it should be composed of different forms.
    - Different rhymes but the same theme.
  - **1920** *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* – a semi-biographical poem.
    - Speaking of himself in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, Pound criticizes his earlier works.
    - Intellectual adventures.
- The evil of the world is caused by Jews, he became a fascist. He actively supported Mussolini.
  - 1943 Pound was arrested for treason, he was closed in a cage on display.
  - He was closed in mental hospital but in 1958 he was released as incurable.
  - Ezra Pound helped other writers such as T.S. Eliot and James Joyce.

### Amy Lowell 1874-1925

- She was a little bit too sentimental.
- Ezra Pound termed her version of Imagism as Amygism (Imagism with a sentimental touch).
- She posthumously won the **Pulitzer Prize for Poetry** in **1926**.

### IMAGISTIC MOVEMENT

#### H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) 1886-1961

- The most perfect Imagist.
- Poems:
  - Very short, economical in form;
  - Extremely precise pictures;
  - Quite free form, no rhymes and no rhythm.
- She wasn't patronised; she was very similar to male poets but her sex degraded her writing.
- LOGOCENTRISM – a method of literary analysis in which words and language are regarded as a fundamental expression of external reality, excluding non-linguistic factors such as historical context.
- PHALLOGOCENTRISM – a neologism coined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Jacques Derrida to refer to the privileging of the masculine in the construction of meaning.
  - In patriarchal cultures, language belongs to men.
- She played with words and attempted to give them new meaning.
- References to the female sex and myths.
- She was aware of the psychoanalysis in her poems.

### T.S. Eliot 1888-1965

After working as a philosophy assistant at Harvard 1909-1910, he moved to Paris where he studied philosophy at the Sorbonne.

#### EARLY POEMS:

- Centred around the individual;
- One single person's quarrel with the world;
- Ironic, bitter and decadent.
- In modern world, poetry must be found through pain; beauty is suspicious.
- Eliot avoids straightforward expressions, only suggestions.

- Personal emotions.
- **1915** *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*
  - A dramatic interior monologue,
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person speaker who distrusts women,
  - Attitude: eroticism, mysterious, threatening, giving the sense of inhibition.
  - A tormented man.
- OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE – a symbolic article (image, phrase) used to provide explicit, rather than implicit, access to such traditionally inexplicable concepts as emotions or colour.
- **T.S. ELIOT AS A LITERARY CRITIC**
  - **1920** A collection of critical essays on tradition, continuity, objective discipline.
  - He did not want indulgent and subjective romanticism in modern poetry.
  - **Irony** as the most important literary device.
  - Commentary on Virginia Woolf's writing: '*I struggle to keep the writing as much as possible in Male hands, as I distrust the Feminine in literature.*'
- **1922** *The Waste Land*
  - The term *waste land* is the poetic expression of the Age;
  - Shifts between satire and prophecy,
  - Abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location and time,
  - Popular songs, jokes, stories,
  - References to Greek myths, ancient culture, Shakespeare;
  - Theme: the criticism of modern life.
  - Very complex poem.
  - Famous phrases:
    - *April is the cruellest month.*
    - *I will show you fear in a handful of dust.*
- Eliot thinks he's better than others, he despises everyone, even his readers.

#### MIDDLE STAGE

- About modern life and how it failed Eliot's expectations.
- Eliot's wife was mentally ill and was put in a mental hospital, that is the time of his breakdown. He joined the church of England and became very religious.
- **1930** *Ash-Wednesday*
  - Religious theme,
  - More optimistic,
  - It traces spiritual problems and struggles towards beliefs in Christianity.
- Plays
  - **1935** *Murder in the Cathedral* – very uncomplicated play.

#### LATE STAGE

- **1943** *Four Quartets*
  - The most ambitious, longer work on a religious theme: spirituality and reincarnation.
- **1949** *Cocktail Party*
  - Comedy,
  - Allegory of faith.
- 1947 the death of Eliot's wife.
- **1949 Nobel Prize in Literature.**
- 1957 Eliot married a woman younger than him, Esmé Valerie Fletcher.
- The most influential Modern literary writer.

#### **OTHER MODERNIST WRITERS:**

- 1) INTERNATIONALISTS poets who followed Eliot and Pound,
- 2) REGIONALISTS traditional poets.

#### **INTERNATIONALISTS**

- Experimenting with form.
- **1913** *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* founded by Harriet Monroe
  - Very influential,
  - It discovered many poets,
  - Avant-garde, aesthetic possibilities.

#### e.e. cummings 1894-1962

- *A sentimental and romantic Modernist.*
- Extremely experimental form of poetry.
- Abandonment of capital letters.

- Very conventional themes: optimistic, very often about love, natural world, in the way it was treated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, very peaceful.
- Cummings hates hypocrisy and lies.
- The individual has to make decisions.  
\* Transcendentalism
- Experiments:
  - Splitting words, chopping them up into smaller pieces,
  - Experimenting with spaces and punctuation.
- Difficult poems about simple things.
- **1958** *l(a*
  - *A leaf fall loneliness* – one sentence arranged in a specific way.
  - Themes: optimistic, traditional, funny, sex described in a funny manner.
- Cummings took part in WWI as an ambulance driver. He became disillusioned with the war. He was imprisoned for being a spy, but there was no proof.
- **1922** *The Enormous Room* – an autobiographical novel about his temporary imprisonment in France during WWI.
- **1926** *my sweet old etcetera*

### Wallace Stevens 1879-1955

- The opposite to e.e. cummings.
- Very easy form, simple vocabulary, no slang nor dirty subjects, very elegant.
- Extremely conventional.
- Difficult themes.
- He was more of a philosopher than a poet, he does not follow any literary tradition.
- Main interests: purifying intellect and sensitivity – those are the duties of poetry.
- Human imagination is the highest of faculties.
- Theme: it is only imagination that enables to see morality in the world which is not moral.
- Art perceives, expresses and shapes life. Life has no meaning if we do not look at it through art.
- **1919** *Anecdote of the Jar*

JAR  
(jar controls nature, it's human  
imagination)

$\longleftrightarrow$

WILDERNESS

  - Nature is not beautiful unless we look at it through our human eyes.
  - Criticism of religion, especially Christianity.
- **1922** *A High-Toned Old Christian Woman*
  - Transient life.
  - Opposing all codified systems: stiff ideas about life, politics, morality.
  - World is chaotic, it is imagination that controls the world.

### Hart Crane 1899-1932

- Rather optimistic poetry, but his life was not so happy.
  - Alcoholic, self-destructive life, homosexuality which either inspired or tormented him.
- 1931-1932 Crane visited Mexico on a Guggenheim Fellowship. He failed in producing historical poems on Mexico, he committed suicide.
- **1921-1926** *Voyages* – a collection of poems;
  - containing his most famous lyrics *Voyages: II*, this love cycle of six poems was largely fuelled by his love affair with Emil Opffer, a Danish merchant mariner.
- Love for America and civilization.
- **1930** *The Bridge*
  - A long poem inspired by the Brooklyn Bridge.
  - Praising the world and humans.
- His poems were published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*.

### William Carlos Williams 1883-1963

He was a paediatrician and general practitioner of medicine with a medical degree.

- Human experience is everything that really matters.
- His poetry rather praises life.
- Williams did not want to be seen as an artist but as an ordinary person.
- He examined the role of the poet in American society;
  - *No ideas but in things*. (*A Sort of a Song* 1946)
- Anti-intellectual, understandable poetry to all readers. Williams hated learned rhetoric.
- **1934** *This Is Just to Say*

- About plums.
- Very simple poem with happy little pictures.
- **1923 *Spring and All*** – a hybrid work made up of alternating sections of prose and free verse.
  - It might be understood as a manifesto of the imagination: the prose passages are dramatic, energetic, and often cryptic series of statements about the ways in which language can be renewed such that it does not describe the world, but recreates it. These passages are interspersed with poems that demonstrate this recreation in both their form and content.
  - Dark and gloomy about the ugliness of spring.
  - At the end, Williams mentions that we will survive, there is still hope.
- Themes: humanistic, every-day experience, pain and joy, very little deep philosophy, small things in life are the most important, circle of life and death, optimistic way of thinking about it.
- Style: easy language, vulgar slang, strong Imagism.

### **Marianne Moore 1887-1972**

- She was recognized and appreciated by T.S. Eliot.
- Her writing as masculine as it can be.
- Both style and content are difficult.
- Very controlled form ~ it has to be treated as mathematics.
- Ideas taken from science and reference books, rarely literary references.
- **1919 *Poetry*** – a poem in which she hopes for poets who can produce ‘imaginary gardens with real toads in them.’
  - It expresses her idea that meter, or anything else that claims the exclusive title ‘poetry’, is not as important as delight in language and precise, heartfelt expression in any form.
  - Irony and wit,
  - Syllabics.

### **Edna St. Vincent Millay 1892-1950**

- Typically emancipated woman, bisexual.
- Happy, romantic and light poetry.
- Theme: love
- Tone: humour and satire
- **1923 She was the first woman to collect the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.**
- After WWII she wrote serious poetry on gloomy subjects – nobody wanted to read that.
- **1920 *First Fig*** (from the collection *A Few Figs from Thistles*)
  - My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends –  
It gives lovely light!
  - Themes of the collections: exploration of female sexuality and feminism.

## **TRADITIONALISTS**

### **1) CALIFORNIA**

### **Robinson Jeffers 1887-1962**

- Northern California described as a hostile place.
- Nature: cliffs, sea, dangerous-looking landscape, gloomy
- Human being is not central to the universe – Naturalistic view.
- Idée fixe: human society is deprived.
- Nature as an omnipotent and indifferent force.
- Biblical themes.
- Easy to understand poems; descriptive stories with gloomy themes.
- Life is terrible and death if beautiful.
- **1927 *The Women at Point Sur***
  - Female figures looking up at a cliff; the contrast between the small human beings and nature.
- **1926 *Hurt Hawks***
  - About a hawk with a broken wing.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> part: poetical description, philosophical;
    - how weakness is worse for those who are strong, contempt for those who ask for mercy.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> part: a story of what the speaker did for the bird – he shot the hawk.

## 2) NEW ENGLAND

**Robert Frost 1874-1963**

- He was strongly influenced by Emerson and Thoreau (Transcendentalists).
- Love for nature.
- Frost despised Eliot, Pound, and other Modernists.
- The idea that if one cannot understand the poem then it's not good; even the deepest things can be said in a simple way.
- Very traditional, almost always sympathetic.
- A model of the American great poet – he lectured, he was very social, he wanted to be popular with everybody.
- Cultivation of the patriarchal image.
- Frost wrote about New England's landscape (severe winters, meadows), but he was not a nature poet.
  - Nature as a background or a symbol.
  - Interaction between man and nature.
- **1922** *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*
  - Few levels: comparison of the human being and the animal.
  - Good form: rhymes are arranged in such a way that stresses the theme.
  - Theme: an urge to die.
  - Nature is important but it's not the place where you can find God. Attention is focused on loving your own place in the world.
  - American sense of humour.
- **Themes:**
  - 1) Sense of brotherhood
    - **1914** *Mending Wall*
      - A metaphorical poem, written in blank verse, set in the countryside and it is about one man questioning why he and his neighbour must rebuild the stone wall dividing their farms each spring.
        - They live in harmony.
    - **1905** *The Death of the Hired Man*
      - An epic poem primarily concerning a conversation, over a short time period in a single evening, between a farmer and his wife about what to do with an ex-employee named Silas.
  - 2) Interest in the particular, individual.
  - 3) Faith in American character and purpose.
  - 4) Poetry of feeling.
- **Form:**
  - 1) Very often very regular – rhythm and rhymes.
  - 2) The form is very controlled.
- Sometimes narrative poems; Frost does not pay attention to form.
- Frost does not like ornamentation, he does not use too many metaphors.
- Emotions and quite deep philosophy.
- **1916** *The Road Not Taken*
  - A narrative poem consisting of four stanzas about a man who entered the woods and found two paths.
  - *I took one less travelled by, / And that made all the difference.*
  - The interpretations of the poem are different: optimistic/pessimistic.
- **1922** *Design*
  - A very gothic poem about a spider and a moth.
  - Theme: who designed this horrible thing, the spider – Was it God?
- Robert Frost tried to change the date of his birth from 1874 to 1875 because he counted the months and he found that he was conceived before his parents' marriage.
- He received **four Pulitzer Prizes** in 1924, 1931, 1937 and 1943.

**Edwin Arlington Robinson 1869-1935**

- He was recognized very late in his life.
- He knew F.D. Roosevelt in person.
- He received **three Pulitzer Prizes** in 1922, 1925 and 1928.
- Gloomy, associated with Post-Puritan New England
  - Joyless New England.
- He often stresses difficult life.
- **Theme:**
  - Psychological poems,



- Almost always about tragedies, loneliness, mischances and dramas.
- **Style:** conventional form; he does not believe in Modernist experimentation.
- **1916 *Eros Turannos***
  - A lyric poem about woman's self-destructive love for a man who will be trialed.
  - Terror and tragedy
- **1897 *Richard Cory***
  - The poem describes a person who is wealthy, well educated, mannerly, and admired by the people in his town. Despite all this, he takes his own life.
  - The speaker is plural.
  - Psychological poem.
- 3) MIDWEST**
  - \* Cowboys, gamblers, prostitutes.
  - \* Farmland.
  - \* Not too intellectual nor pessimistic.
  - \* Associated with big cities, Chicago
    - CHICAGO RENAISSANCE (the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

### **Edgar Lee Masters 1869-1950**

- He was a lawyer specialised in criminal law.
- 1912 he started his career in Chicago literature movement.
- Idea to reflect life of Midwest region.
- EPIGRAM – a brief interesting, memorable, and sometimes surprising or satirical statement.
- **1915 *Spoon River Anthology*** – a collection of short free-form poems that collectively describe the life of the fictional small town of Spoon River.
  - The collection includes 212 separate characters, all providing 244 accounts of their lives and losses.
  - Each following poem is an epitaph of a dead citizen, delivered by the dead themselves.
  - 1963 It was made into play.
  - Regarded as shocking; the characters reveal that life in a pastoral village is not as sweet as it is seen – a small town is not something we should long for.
  - **Theme:**
    - Distaste for small town value, it's hypocritical
    - Aggression towards small town.
  - Most of the epigrams are bitter.
  - Each poem's title is the name of the speaker.
    - **Lucinda Matlock** – a country woman who enjoyed her life.
      - Optimistic
      - *Life is too strong for you -- / It takes life to love life.*
    - **Amanda Barker** – a young woman talking about her husband
 

*HENRY got me with child,  
Knowing that I could not bring forth life  
Without losing my own.  
In my youth therefore I entered the portals of dust.  
Traveller, it is believed in the village where I lived  
That Henry loved me with a husband's love  
But I proclaim from the dust  
That he slew me to gratify his hatred.*
  - Masters is sympathetic towards these trapped lives.
- Masters is similar to Jewett, but she's sympathetic and he's gloomy.
- The most ironic, very realistic.
- He disliked provincialism, he knew the subject well.
- His philosophy is straightforward and simple.

### **Vachel Lindsay 1879-1931**

- "To be the great sinner of the YMCA army."
- He's considered the father of modern singing poetry, as he referred to it, in which verses are meant to be sung or chanted.
- Because of his identity as a performance artist and his use of American Midwest themes, Lindsay became known in the 1910s as the "Prairie Troubador."
- **1913 *General William Booth Enters into Heaven*** – a poem praising the general who was a revivalist preacher, he was the founder of the Salvation Army.
  - To be sung to the tune of *The Blood of the Lamb* with indicated instrument.
  - A refrain, *Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?* with the accompaniment of the drums.

- Lindsay wanted to close the relation between him and the public.
- He wrote about everything in the human being except for the mind.
- He hated the idea of poetry for poetry's sake.
  - People only want entertainment, not to listen about serious matters.
- Lindsay sank into depression, and in 1931 he committed suicide by drinking a bottle of Lye.

### **Carl Sandburg 1878-1967**

- He was the recipient of **three Pulitzer Prizes**: two for his poetry (1919 and 1951), and another for his biography of Abraham Lincoln (1940).
  - Stories for children and folklore.
  - His parents were Swedish, however, through his works he stressed the beauty of America.
  - 1913 he moved to Chicago.
  - Poetry published in Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*.
  - Dynamism
  - **1916 Chicago**
    - Praising the force of the city.
    - City as an animal – Chicago is energetic and young.
  - Sandburg was compared to Whitman:
    - Great faith in America
    - Feeling of democracy
    - The form is similar – long lines.
  - **Characteristics**:
    - Free poetry from gentility, poetry should be for everyone.
    - Realism of new American city and its brutality.
    - Industrial America
    - Respect for common man's cleverness
    - Sensitive to hypocrisy, injustice.
  - **1936 *The People, Yes***
    - A book-length poem interspersed with references to American culture, phrases and stories.
- 4) **SOUTH**
- \* THE TENNESSEE RENAISSANCE (the name from a group of poets who started this literary movement).

**The Fugitives** – a group of poets and literary scholars who came together at Vanderbilt University, around **1920**. They published a small literary magazine called *The Fugitive* (1922-1925) which showcased their works. They were very conservative in political matters, they were racists and nationalists, they considered themselves patriotic.

- Very progressive in art.
- The South as THEIR country.
- Representatives:
  - John Crowe Ransom
  - Donald Davidson
  - Allen Tate
  - Robert Penn Warren
- Warren's idea that they should widen their magazine's interest to such things as politics and economy.
  - They even changed their name – *The Agrarians*.
- Comparing the South to Ancient Greece (pastoral, slavery), the Southern architecture resembles the Greek construction.
- The Fugitives started the LITERATURE OF THE SOUTH, they developed literary criticism, they also created contemporary aesthetics of poetry and prose:
  - Elegant language
  - Balance
  - Gentle irony
  - Understatement
  - Tension
  - Lack of sentimentality.
- The Fugitive poetry is not exciting.
- In common with Polish culture: surviving through culture, theme of patriotism.
- Setting:
  - Usually domestic,
  - Average people, stressing their nobility.
- Religiously fundamentalists – they despised Christians and Jews.

- Form: regular rhythm, stanzas formed very traditionally.

THE AESTHETICS OF:	
THE FUGITIVES	INTERNATIONAL MODERNISM
Respect for tradition The use of irony Detached tone Lack of sentimentality	
Theme of patriotism Elegant language Regional concerns	Vulgar slang

- Goals:
  - Reassessment of the past
    - Strength is in traditional value
  - Condemnation of the materialism of modern city (contrasted with the tranquil classical Greece).
- Division:
  - NORTH: reason, prose, industry
  - SOUTH: sensibility and feelings, poetry, agriculture.

### John Crowe Ransom 1888-1974

- Very racist
- **1925** *The Equilibrists* – about a black man and a black woman who want to be together but their owner is against it.
- **“Balance and tension necessary to the beauty”** – The Fugitives’ credo
- **1924** *Captain Carpenter* – a captain attacked by the damsels, they cut off his limbs, they try to harm him.
  - The tradition is strong and goes on.
  - The poem seems comical but it’s deep.

### Allen Tate 1899-1979

- **1928** *Ode to the Confederate Dead*
  - The poem takes place in a graveyard in the South where the narrator grieves the loss of the Confederate soldiers buried there.

### Donald Davidson 1893-1968

- **1938** *Lee in the Mountains*
  - A patriotic poem about the Civil War.

### Robert Penn Warren 1905-1989

- **1947** he received **Pulitzer Prize** for *All the King’s Men* (1946).
- **1958** and **1979 Pulitzer Prizes** for poetry.
- Accessible; similar to Faulkner but easier.
- **1955** *Band of Angels*
  - A novel spoken from the perspective of a woman who was raised as white but she was said to be black.
- **1930** *I’ll Take My Stand*
  - The Agrarian manifesto on economy and art, religion and race, and sketches of pastoral life.
- Hatred towards the mass culture and technology.

### NEW CRITICISM

- **1938** Cleanth Brooks & Robert Penn Warren published a text book for universities – *Understanding Poetry*.
  - (a) Analysing literature through formal methods,
  - (b) Never using a mere opinion,
  - (c) Scrupulously formal analysis,
  - (d) Admiration for irony,
  - (e) Great reference for the canon,
  - (f) Any kind of ideology is irrelevant and propagandistic,
  - (g) Literature is to enjoy not to do good.
- **Rules for New Criticism poetry interpretation**:
  - (a) Form and meaning cannot be separated,

- (b) Do not paraphrase,
- (c) Biography of the author and historical circumstances play no role,
- (d) Poem should be an entity, everything has a meaning.

- respecting only the traditional white man canon
  - complete distance from biographical, historical context
  - unimportance of morality, politics, ethics
  - articulating the job of a critic
- | outdated

- **John Crowe Ransom** *The Poet as a Woman*

### EARLY MODERNISM IN PROSE

**1920s:** money, stress on the individual, consumerism, interest in the exotic, decadent.

**1930s:** interest turns towards social psychology, lack of money, crisis, defined ideology.

### Sherwood Anderson 1876-1941

- **1919** *Winesburg, Ohio* – a short story cycle structured around the life of protagonist George Willard, from the time he was a child to his growing independence and ultimate abandonment of Winesburg as a young man.
  - Theme: dislike towards a small American town
  - *Hands* (the opening story) about Wing Biddlebaum, an extremely shy person.
- “A good book must be pessimistic.”
- Anderson treated literature like a goddess; he was ridiculed by many writers.
- “Life does not have a plot. Life is not a story.”

### Sinclair Lewis 1885-1951

- The first writer from the United States to be awarded the **Nobel Prize in Literature**.
- Insightful and satirical views of American society and capitalist values.
- **1920** *Main Street*
  - A satirical novel about a young woman who marries a doctor and they move to his hometown. She is appalled at the backwardness of the town, she tries to reform the ugly Gopher Prairie but unsuccessfully. She leaves her husband and moves to Washington, D.C., but she eventually returns.
  - It's not naturalistically sad, it's realistic.
  - The ending is ambiguous.
- **1922** *Babbitt*
  - A satire of American culture, society, and behaviour, it critiques the vacuity of middle-class American life and its pressure towards conformity.
- **1925** *Arrowsmith*
  - A story about a bright and scientifically minded Martin Arrowsmith as he makes his way from a small town in the Midwest to the upper echelons of the scientific community.

### Willa Cather 1873-1947

- Novels of frontier life on the Great Plains.
- **1923** the **Pulitzer Prize** for *One of Ours* (1922), a novel set during WWI.
- **1913** *O Pioneers!*
  - The story of the Bergsons, a family of Swedish immigrants in the farm country near the fictional town of Hanover, Nebraska, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- **1915** *The Song of the Lark*
  - The self-portrait of an artist in the making. The story revolves around an ambitious young heroine who leaves her hometown to go to the big city to fulfil her dream of becoming a well-trained pianist. The novel captures her independent-mindedness, her strong work ethic, and her ascent to her highest achievement. At each step along the way, her realization of the mediocrity of her peers propels her to greater levels of accomplishment, but in the course of her ascent she must discard those relationships which no longer serve her.
  - **Künstlerroman**
- She was one of the first open American lesbians.
- She was never hostile to men.
- Characteristics:
  - Female narrators (most often)
  - Her happiest characters are single.

- **1918** *My Ántonia*
  - The book's narrator, Jim Burden, arrives in the town of Black Hawk, Nebraska, on the same train as the Shimerdas, when he goes to live with his grandparents after his parents have died. Jim develops strong feelings for Ántonia.
  - The novel is divided into five books, some of which incorporate short stories Cather had previously written, based on her own life growing up on the Nebraska prairies. The volumes correspond roughly to the stages of Ántonia's life up through her marriage and motherhood.
- Cather writes a lot about immigrants.

## HIGH MODERNISM

- The term used to describe a subgenre of literary modernism, and generally encompasses works published between the end of the WWI and the beginning of the WWII. It believes that there is a clear distinction between capital-A Art and mass culture, and it places itself firmly on the side of Art and in opposition to popular or mass culture.
- The most innovative writing of 1920-30s.

### Gertrude Stein 1874-1946

- Upper-class German Jewish parents.
- She was a proud lesbian, rich, very well educated.
- 1903 she moved to Paris.
- Art collector of seminal modernist paintings.
- A renowned Saturday gathering place at her home for expatriate American artists and writers.
- She wrote a theory on literature.
- **Alice B. Toklas** – an American-born member of the Parisian avant-garde of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She hosted a salon that attracted expatriate American writers, together with Gertrude Stein. They also were lovers.
- Characteristics:
  - All kinds of artificial codes that she invited of how writing should be done – you need a key to understand writing.
  - She wants to discover some depths through the language.
  - Repetitions
    - **Cinema effect** – effect of smooth movement; writing the same sentence several times but changing one word at a time.
      - Hemingway adapted this form but he modified it for the better.
  - Imitating colours through different sounds.
- **1909** *Three Lives*
  - The book is separated into three stories, *The Good Anna*, *Melantha*, and *The Gentle Lena*. Each one is a psychological portrait of the named protagonist. All three are members of the lower socioeconomic stratum of the fictional town of Bridgepoint.
- **1925** *The Making of Americans*
  - The novel traces the genealogy, history, and psychological development of members of the fictional Hersland and Dehning families.
  - Imagism in prose.
- **1933** *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*
  - Written in the guise of an autobiography authored by Alice B. Toklas, who was Stein's lover.
- Gertrude Stein is similar to Ezra Pound.

## LOST GENERATION

- A group of expatriate writers who resided in Paris. The term originated with Gertrude Stein; it was those in their mid-twenties to thirties, the men who had been through WWI, whom the garage owner considered a 'lost generation.'
  - Representatives:
    - Ernest Hemingway
    - Francis Scott Fitzgerald
    - Hart Crane
    - William Carlos Williams
- |   |
|---|
| they didn't have a certain idea, only their conviction that they're so excellent. |
|---|
- Aim: being different that was shown in their style; originality of ideas.
  - Bitter attitude: "The war disillusioned our faith in everything."
  - Europe was cheap; many Americans moved to Europe in the 1920s.
  - Disillusionment with the American hypocrisy.

**Francis Scott Fitzgerald 1896-1940**

- Perfect representative of the 1920s – charming, witty, rich, with a glamorous wife, Zelda.  

THE JAZZ AGE ROARING 20S FLAPPER		terms introduced by him
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- He's considered as the best American writer.
- **1920** *This Side of Paradise*
  - examines the lives and morality of post-World War I youth. Its protagonist, Amory Blaine, is an attractive Princeton University student who dabbles in literature.
  - Theme: love warped by greed and status-seeking.
- **1922** *The Beautiful and the Damned*
  - It provides a portrait of the Eastern elite during the Jazz Age, exploring New York Café Society.
- These two novels appeal to upper-class society and those who want to be a part of it.
- **1925** *The Great Gatsby*
  - The story takes place in 1922, during the Roaring Twenties, the post-World War I prosperous time in the United States.
  - The main character, Jay Gatsby, is a young, mysterious millionaire with shady business connections, he's a bootlegger. He is obsessed with Daisy Buchanan, whom he had met when he was a young officer stationed in the south.
  - Theme: failure of the American Dream, artificiality (everything is corrupt).
  - Similarity of women: they are all obsessed with money, they're dishonest.
  - Men have double standards.
    - Old money → old aristocrats.
    - New money → those who just made money.
- Fitzgerald likes to write about money.
- He stole his wife's diaries and used them in his fiction.
- **1934** *Tender Is the Night*
  - An autobiographical novel about the rise and fall of Dick Diver, a promising young psychoanalyst and his wife, Nicole, who is also one of his patients.
  - Theme: selling the talent.

**Ernest Hemingway 1899-1961**

- Reporter for *The Kansas City Star*
- The WWI ambulance driver, he was seriously wounded.
- He fell in love with Agnes von Kurowsky, a Red Cross nurse, but she rejected him.
- He was a womanizer.
- 1921 Hemingway settled in Paris, he met Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound who encouraged him to write.
- **1923** His first collection of stories.
- Very simple style: short sentences, not many adjectives, mainly declarative sentences.
- **Cinema effect** – repeating parts of the sentence.
- **1925** *Big Two-Hearted River*
  - A straightforward narrative of one of Nick Adams's days camping alone near the river. As Nick constructs his tent, fishes in the nearby river and cooks his catch, Hemingway describes his mood in two ways – up and down.
  - Extremely monotonous sentences and the plot.
  - **Metronome effect** – the sentences have a beat.
  - The **calming down** effect – the style and plot are combined.
- **1926** *The Sun Also Rises (Fiesta)*
  - A group of American and British expatriates travels from Paris to the Festival of San Fermin in Pamplona to watch the running of the bulls and the bullfighting.
  - Great commercial and critical success.
  - 1930 the novel was banned in Boston.
  - Jake Barnes – the protagonist whose war wound made him impotent; Hemingway's alter ego.
  - Other characters suffer from mental castration.
- **1929** *A Farewell to Arms*
  - It focuses on a romance between the expatriate American, Henry, and a Scottish V.A.D. cadre, Catherine Barkley, against the backdrop of WWI, cynical soldiers, fighting and the displacement of populations.
  - \* **First novel about desertion: Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage***
  - Private matters are more important than war.
  - Disillusionment with the war propaganda.

- **1932** *Death in the Afternoon*
  - A non-fiction about the ceremony and traditions of Spanish bullfighting.
- 1933 Hemingway spent 5 months on the Safari.
- **1935** *Green Hills of Africa*
  - Much of the narration describes Hemingway's adventures hunting in East Africa, interspersed with ruminations about literature and authors.
- **1937** *To Have and Have Not*
  - About Harry Morgan, a fishing boat captain who runs contraband between Cuba and Florida. The novel depicts Harry as an essentially good man who is forced into black market activity by economic forces beyond his control.
- **1940** *For Whom the Bell Tolls*
  - It tells the story of Robert Jordan, a young American in the International Brigades attached to a republican guerrilla unit during the Spanish Civil War. As a dynamiter, he is assigned to blow up a bridge during an attack on the city of Segovia. He falls in love with a Spanish girl.
  - Theme: the loss of liberty.
  - What it means to kill, what courage is.
- 1937-1939 Hemingway was a war correspondent, he experienced the war.
- He settled near Havana in Cuba.
- **1950** *Across the River and into the Trees*
  - The opening of the novel is set in Trieste, on the last day in the life of the protagonist, Colonel Richard Cantwell. Much of the novel is a protracted flashback, during which Cantwell reminisces about young Venetian woman, Renata, and his life as a soldier during the war.
  - New theme: aging.
- **1954** Hemingway received a **Nobel Prize in Literature**.
- Posthumously published three novels:
  - **1970** *Islands in the Stream*
    - It was meant to encompass three stories to illustrate different stages in the life of its main character, Thomas Hudson.
  - **1986** *The Garden of Eden*
    - The story of five months in the lives of David Bourne, an American writer, and his wife, Catherine. It is set mainly in the French Riviera, specifically in the Côte d'Azur, and in Spain. The story begins with their honeymoon in the Camargue. The Bournes soon meet a young woman named Marita, with whom they both fall in love, but only one can ultimately have her. David starts an affair with Marita, while his relationship with his wife deteriorates.
    - Lesbian relationship
    - Sexual triangle.
  - **1999** *True at First Light*
    - Hemingway explores conflict within a marriage, the conflict between the European and native cultures in Africa, and the fear a writer feels when his work becomes impossible. The book includes descriptions of his earlier friendships with other writers and digressive ruminations on the nature of writing.
- Themes:
  - Violence and death, we are predators;
  - War – first he was disillusioned then he became ideological;
  - Sports – mainly violent, like bullfighting, hunting, fishing;
  - Nature – we are a part of nature, nature lives for itself, we can calm down thanks to the nature.
  - God – Hemingway was an atheist
    - One of his favourite words: 'nada';
  - Sensuality – sexuality, eroticism;
  - Writing itself – main heroes as artists.
- Phases of writing:
  - 1) World War I
  - 2) Sport, individuality
  - 3) Social problems
- Types of characters:
  - Male characters – simple, primitive people (boxers, bullfighters), who have the sense of honour;
    - An intellectual disillusioned with war.
    - **Code hero**: a man who has a code of honour and standards, courageous, honourable, tough.

- **1952 *The Old Man and the Sea***
  - He does not get excited, he controls his emotions,
  - Very manly, good soldier or a hunter
  - Treating women with certain superiority
  - Sensitive
  - A know-how-man
- Female characters – strong and bitchy, masculine, unpleasant, asexual, not always bad characters.
  - Very young, sensitive, they look like boys (Hemingway prefers boyish looking women).
  - **1940 *For Whom the Bell Tolls***
    - Big, fat, asexual woman, who's a fighter
    - Young and beautiful woman
- **Hemingway and Feminists**
  - He was criticised for creating women who are not human.
  - Judith Fetterley: *A Farewell to Arms* is hostile to women; all women who have power are either bitches or old maids, women who don't have authority (virgins or whores).
    - "She's a nurse, she will make you a fine man."
    - The novel ends tragically, during the labour Catherine dies – we don't cry for her, a man is left alone.
    - Catherine frees him, he's not burden to a family.
  - He was criticised for his manly characters and too simple women, and for his attitude towards the Spanish War ("Let Spanish with their own problems").
- Stories from woman's point of view:
  - **1927 *Hills Like White Elephants***
  - **1925 *Cat in the Rain***

## **HARLEM RENAISSANCE** (from about 1919 until the early or mid-1930s)

Term: Known also as the "New Negro Movement", named after the 1925 anthology by Alain Locke.

Though it was centred in the Harlem neighbourhood of New York City, many French-speaking black writers from African and Caribbean colonies were also influenced.

- The district had originally been developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an exclusive suburb for the white middle and upper classes; but it became an African-American neighbourhood in the early 1900s.

### Historical background:

- The emancipated African Americans began to strive for civic participation, political equality and economic and cultural self-determination.
- By 1875 sixteen blacks had been elected and served in Congress.
- The Democratic whites denied African Americans their exercise of civil and political rights by terrorising black communities with lynch mobs and other forms of violence.
- Life in the South became increasingly difficult, African Americans began to migrate North in great numbers.
- Blacks sought a better standard of living and relief from the institutionalised racism in the South.

**1917** white playwright Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for a Negro Theatre* featured African-American actors conveying complex human emotions and yearnings.

- They rejected the stereotypes of the blackface and minstrel show traditions.

### Common themes:

- The influence of the experience of slavery and emerging African-American folk traditions on black identity,
- The effects of institutional racism,
- The dilemmas inherent in performing and writing for elite white audiences,
- The question of how to convey the experience of modern black life in the urban North.

### Characteristics:

- An overt racial pride that came to be represented in the idea of the New Negro.
- A wide variety of cultural elements and styles:
  - Traditional and new experimental forms such as modernism and the new form of jazz poetry.

- 1) Was there something like African-American art?
- 2) Are black literary norms the same as white norms?
- 3) If not, what is different and what is alike?
- 4) What is the political function of black literature?



**Eugene O'Neill: *Emperor Jones* (1920)**

- White playwright writing about a black protagonist.
- Mainstream American theatre
  - First black hero

**Claude McKay 1889-1948**

- Jamaican-American writer
- Novels:
  - **1928** *Home to Harlem*
  - **1929** *Banjo*
  - **1933** *Banana Bottom*
- Autobiographical books:
  - **1937** *A Long Way from Home*
  - **1979** *My Green Hills of Jamaica* (published posthumously)
- **1922** *If We Must Die* – an angry poem
  - A sonnet
  - Let us die in honour, so we'll be admired.
  - Against racism and whites, but it is said to be in 'white form'; criticised by blacks.

**Alain Locke 1885-1954**

- An American writer, philosopher, educator, and patron of the arts.
- **1925** *The New Negro: An Interpretation of Negro Life* – an anthology of fiction, poetry, and essays on African and African-American art and literature.
  - Popularising black poetry.

**Langston Hughes 1902-1967**

- One of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form jazz poetry.
- Style: jazz rhythm, black slang
- **1940** *The Big Sea* – an autobiography about 1920s and Harlem Renaissance.
  - Extremely simple style.
- **1922** *Negro* – a poem written without the European pomp.
- **1932** *I, Too* – a poem speaking for equality of blacks and whites.

**Countee Cullen 1903-1943**

- Theme: racism as a sort of mental sickness; segregation, violence, anger with whites.
- He was criticised for being injured by romanticism.
- **1925** *Heritage* – a poem contemplating Africa

**Nella Larsen 1891-1964**

- The daughter of a Danish immigrant and a West Indian man of predominantly African descent.
- College education.
- **1928** *Quicksand* – a largely autobiographical novel.
  - The protagonist, Helga Crane, is a lonely, isolated woman whose life does become one of gloom. Helga is of mixed race; her mother is white and her father is black. Helga's father abandons his wife and infant daughter and Helga's mother soon remarries a white man. Helga now has a white stepfamily. The dark-skinned Helga grows up ostracized by both whites and blacks, surviving a lonely childhood only to spend her adult life continuing to seek acceptance wherever she goes.
  - You should hate whites.
  - Blacks are also racists.
- **1929** *Passing* - Set primarily in the Harlem neighbourhood of New York City in the 1920s, the story centres on the reunion of two childhood friends of mixed-race ancestry—Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield—and their increasing fascination with each other's lives.
  - **Racial "passing"**:
    - 1) A person classified as a member of one racial group attempting to be accepted as a member of a different racial group. The term was used especially in the U.S. to describe a person of mixed-race heritage assimilating into the white majority during times when legal and social conventions of hypo-descent classified the person as a minority, subject to racial segregation and discrimination.
      - For blacks – you're black but there's so much white blood in you that your skin is white.
      - For whites – you may marry a black person without knowing it, terrible idea.

- Women characters:
  - 1) Beautiful black woman with whiter skin, she's married to a black doctor.
  - 2) Her friend who is married to a white man, their child is white.
  - 3) A black/white woman married to a white racist, who is not aware of her being black.
- Larsen published a similar story to a book previously published by a white woman.

### Zora Neale Hurston 1891-1960

- She changed the date of her birth to 1901 in order to qualify for a free high-school education.
- An American folklorist, anthropologist, and author.
- **1935** *Mules and Men* - a ground-breaking work of "literary anthropology" documenting African-American folklore.
- **1937** *Their Eyes Were Watching God* - narrates main character Janie Crawford's "*ripening from a vibrant, but voiceless, teenage girl into a woman with her finger on the trigger of her own destiny*". It's set in central and southern Florida in the early 20th century.
  - No racial problems are raised. No black struggle.
  - Minstrel technique is used in order to make people laugh.
- She was funny, she wasn't offensive; rebellious and scandalous.
- By some, in the 1940-50s, she was criticised for the same things she was liked before. She did not go for black-white problems.
- 1960s Black Power – she was once again in, she was a separatist.
- 1970s She was discovered by feminists – a **black feminist**.

### **SOUTH**

- As America was becoming a super power, the South was left behind, impoverished materially and morally.
- **The plantation ideal** – everybody had an ideal role: planter as a father, blacks as children, planter's wife as the Southern Belle.
- When the plantations were gone, planters were impoverished.
- Although the slavery was abolished, the suppression wasn't gone. The South was extremely violent and racist. Before, the slaves were protected by their masters; after the abolition, they had to earn their living.
- **Black matriarchy** – older women as the most important in a family, it was easier for them to find jobs and earn money.
- Many young blacks turned into crime.
- Blacks were pushed to education, they sought better ways for their lives.
- Lynching of the blacks, most of lynching happened in Mississippi.

### William Faulkner 1897-1962

- A Southern gentleman.
- **1949** He receive a **Nobel Prize in Literature**.
- **1955** and **1963** Faulkner received **Pulitzer Prize for Fiction**.
- During WWI he wanted to fight in air forces but he was too short in USA, so he joined the British Royal Air Force in Canada. The war ended before he was ready.
- **1926** *Soldiers' Pay* – a novel of lost generation about how a soldier is received at home after coming back.
- Saga of the South – the same characters appear in his various novels
  - Fictional place: Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. Its seat is the town of Jefferson.
  - |          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| Compson  | aristocrats       |
| Sartoris |                   |
| Grierson |                   |
| Snopes   |                   |
|          | poor white family |
- **1929** *The Sound and the Fury* – a novel concerns the downfall of the Compson family, who have been a prominent family in Jefferson, Mississippi, since before the Civil War.
  - Characters:
    - **Jason Compson III** – father of the Compson family, a lawyer and an alcoholic.
    - **Caroline Bascomb Compson** – mother of the family, a self-absorbed neurotic who has never shown affection for any of her children except Jason, whom she seems to like only because he takes after her side of the family. In her old age she has become an abusive hypochondriac.

- **Quentin Compson III** – the oldest child; passionate and neurotic, he commits suicide as the tragic culmination of the damaging influence of his father's nihilistic philosophy and his inability to cope with his sister's sexual promiscuity.
- **Candace "Caddy" Compson** – strong-willed yet caring; Benjy's only caregiver and Quentin's best friend. According to Faulkner, the true hero of the novel. She never develops a voice, but rather allows her brothers' emotions towards her to develop her character.
- **Jason Compson IV** – the bitter, racist third child who is troubled by monetary debt and sexual frustration. He works at a farming goods store owned by a man named Earl and becomes head of the household in 1912. He has been embezzling Miss Quentin's support payments for years.
- **Benjamin "Benjy" Compson** – the mentally disabled fourth child, who is a constant source of shame and grief for his family, especially his mother.
- Parts:
  - 1) Narrated by Benjy. His narrative voice is characterised predominantly by its nonlinearity. It's presented in a seamless stream of consciousness with non-chronological events.
  - 2) Quentin's narration.
  - 3) Jason's narration.
  - 4) Without a first-person narrator, it focuses on Dilsey, the powerful matriarch of the black family servants. She draws a great deal of strength from her faith.
- **Dilsey Gibson** – a stereotype of a nanny, she orders everybody around, she loves everybody in the Compson family, she's kind even for the cruel people. She's the moral form.
- **Southern legacy** – parents fail their children, the South itself is not a good parent; children's suffering caused by the parents failure.
- A novel about the dysfunctional family/South/tradition, obsession with the status and honour.
- The same story is told from different points of view:
  - 1) Mind of an idiot
  - 2) Mind of an intelligent
  - 3) Mind of a sadist
  - 4) Mind of a kind nanny
    - Comparison to Cubism
- Treatment of time:
  - 1) Benjy does not realize the time exist; the presence of italics is meant to indicate significant shifts in the narrative.
  - 2) Quentin realizes time, he's obsessed with it. He wants to live in the past; he wants to stop the time so he breaks a watch. Quentin narrates in the past, even when he talks about his death, as if he was talking from the grave.
- Faulkner intentionally confuses the reader: he uses the same names, there's plenty of doubles in the novel (two Quentins, Caddy – it's also a person who brings the golf balls).
- **Learnt novel** - plenty of allusions (mostly biblical – Benjamin, favourite son).
- **Modernistic style:**
  - \* Readability
  - \* Faulkner wants to contrast the past with the present
    - Benjy confuses the funeral of his grandmother (past) with the wedding of his sister (present)
    - Caddy meeting a man (past) and Miss Quentin meeting a man (present).
- **Freud in the novel:**
  - \* Faulkner writes like a Freudian although he said he didn't read Freud.
  - (a) Children suffer because of the deficiencies of their parents; parents stand for the culture; the young South suffers because of the previous generation.
  - (b) Id → Benjy  
Ego → Quentin  
Superego → Jason
  - (c) Three brothers are obsessed with their sister (according to Freud, they're obsessed erotically).
  - (d) Jason steals because the father failed to feed the family.
- A book of mental problems.
- **Criticism:**
  - Faulkner was mainly criticised for the attitude towards women and the treatment of blacks.
    - (a) Blacks: Faulkner makes Dilsey too loyal, although the family treats her badly.

Black stereotype: black children are malicious.

- (b) Women: Caddy's only presented from the perspective of her brothers, she can't speak for herself.

The mother is shown too negatively.

Women are only presented from the perspective of men who see them as a good mother or a bad mother, or as a good lover or a bad lover.

Women are always rebellious in their femininity. Men are presented as various human characters.

- **Characteristics:**

- (a) Unique geographical setting.

- (b) Attitude to the South.

- (c) **Southern Gothic**

- Gothic literature remained in the South the longest.
- Physical deformations, tortures, sexual deviations.
- The Northern audience loved to read about cruelty in the South.
- Terrible themes: lynching, castration.
- His Gothic is rather humorous. He does not go to the extended picture of sadism.
- **1930** *A Rose for Emily* – the old lady kills her lover because he wanted to leave her, she keeps the decomposed body in her bed.

- (d) Sense of humour – plenty of small jokes.

- (e) Specific style: very difficult sentences, they're not balanced nor grammatical.

- (f) Atmosphere is very dense:

- The reader either loves it or hates it.
- The reader suspect people doing something disgusting.
- Faulkner loved to write about sexual pathology.

**17-19<sup>th</sup> century: you don't talk about body matters.**

**20<sup>th</sup> century: obsession about sexuality.**

- (g) Great sense of ethical obligation.

- Faulkner sides with any abused group of people (women, blacks). He believed that women were in bonds, he liked women to break boundaries and to be difficult.

- (h) He's never sentimental. There's always distance and irony while talking about any moral issues.

- **1929** *Sartoris* – the novel portrays the decay of the Mississippi aristocracy following the social upheaval of the American Civil War.
- **1938** *The Unvanquished* – a collection of seven interrelated stories takes place during the American Civil War and describes the Sartoris family.
- **1930** *As I Lay Dying* – the story of Addie Bundren and her family's quest and motivations – noble or selfish – to honour her wish to be buried in the town of Jefferson.
  - Divided into very short chapters, each narrated by one family member.
  - The horror of poverty.
- All of Faulkner's books are serious, the content is rather grave despite all the humour and gothic elements.
- **1931** *Sanctuary* – the tale of kidnapping of a young Mississippi debutante named Temple Drake. The story follows various threads to connect the characters and to explore the culture in rural Mississippi and Tennessee during prohibition.
  - Temple Drake was raped with a corn cob and then placed in a brothel.
  - By some critics, it is perceived as "the most sadistic horror story."
  - How injustice wins.
  - Gothic elements: sexual pathology, dead bodies.
- **1932** *Light in August* – set in the interwar period, the novel centres around two strangers who arrive at different times to Jefferson.
  - The plot first focuses in Lena Grove, a young pregnant white woman from Alabama looking for the father of her unborn child, and then shifts to explore the life of Joe Christmas, a man who settled in Jefferson and passes as white, but who secretly believes he has some black ancestry.
    - **Joe Christmas** – he hates everybody, his foster father treated him sadistically, his foster mother was too soft so he also despises her. He has a secret sexual relationship with Joanna Burden. This relationship is described in terms of bordering the perversion. He, probably, kills her because she showed him kindness.
- **1936** *Absalom, Absalom!* – a story about three families of the American South, taking place before, during, and after the Civil War.
  - Southern aristocracy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- Relation of the blacks and whites – obsession that you might marry a person who has a drop of black blood.
- **1939 *The Wild Palms*** – a blend of two stories, a love story and a river story. Both stories tell us of a distinct relationship between a man and a woman.
  - *The Wild Palms*: the story of Henry and Charlotte, who meet, fall in forbidden love, travel the country together for work, and, ultimately, experience tragedy when the abortion Henry performs on Charlotte kills her.
  - *Old Man*: the story of a convict who, while being forced to help victims of a flood, rescues a pregnant woman. They are swept away downstream by the flooding Mississippi, and she gives birth to a baby. He eventually gets both himself and the woman to safety and then turns himself in, returning to prison.
- **1948 *Intruder in the Dust*** – the novel focuses on Lucas Beauchamp, a black farmer accused of murdering a white man. He is exonerated through the efforts of black and white teenagers and a spinster from a long-established Southern family.
- **1950 *Requiem for a Nun***
  - The protagonist is Temple Drake; now married with a child, she must learn to deal with her violent, turbulent past as related in *Sanctuary*.
  - Part novel, part play.
  - Bad reviews.
  - Famous quote: “*The past is never dead. It’s not even past.*”

### OTHER SOUTHERN WRITERS

- Southern device – Gothic
  - Disease, death, idiocy.
  - The South is a degenerate place in the United States.

### Katherine A. Porter 1890-1980

- An American journalist, essayist, short story writer, novelist, and political activist.
- Dark themes, such as betrayal, death and the origin of human evil.
- **1962 *Ship of Fools*** - the tale of a group of disparate characters sailing from Mexico to Europe aboard a German freighter and passenger ship.
  - An allegory that traces the rise of Nazism and looks metaphorically at the progress of the world on its "voyage to eternity".
- **1966 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction** for *The Collected Stories*.

### Eudora Welty 1909-2001

- An author of short stories and novels about the American South.
- **1973 Pulitzer Prize** for *The Optimist’s Daughter*.
- **1972 *The Optimist’s Daughter*** - concerns a woman named Laurel, who travels to New Orleans to take care of her father, Judge McKelva, after he has surgery for a detached retina. He fails to recover from the surgery, though, surrenders to his age, and dies slowly as Laurel reads to him from Dickens.
- The first living author to have her works published by the Library of America.

**They both are complex and respected writers, but they were treated as the 2<sup>nd</sup> rate writers (women, short stories).**

### Erskine Caldwell 1903-1987

- His writings about poverty, racism, and social problems won him critical acclaim, but also made him controversial among fellow Southerners of the time.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> rate writer.
- Full details of lynching.
- Ideological.
- Not High Modernism.
- **1932 *Tobacco Road*** - set in rural Georgia, several miles outside Augusta, Georgia during the worst years of the Great Depression. It depicts a family of poor white tenant farmers, the Lesters, as one of the many small Southern cotton farmers estranged by the industrialization of production and the migration into cities.

### William Styron 1925-2006

- **1967 *The Confessions of Nat Turner*** – narrated by Nat Turner, the leader of an 1831 Virginia slave revolt.
  - Black activists were insulted.

- **1951** *Lie Down in Darkness* – about the dysfunctional Virginian Loftis family, and is centred on the funeral of Peyton Loftis, with previous events told in flashbacks by the other characters.
- **1978** *Sophie's Choice* – it concerns a young American Southerner, an aspiring writer, who befriends the Jewish Nathan Landau and his beautiful lover Sophie, a Polish survivor of the German Nazi concentration camps.

### **Flannery O'Connor 1925-1964**

- She often wrote in a Southern gothic style and relied heavily on regional setting and grotesque characters.
- Very bitter and extremely religious.
- Negative novels – what happens with people who never found God.
- Gothic elements: deformed people, handicapped.
- She very often repeats the same characters:
  - One who finds redemption,
  - The other one who is pure evil.
- Intentionally weak characters: sad, frustrated, evil.
- There's always a religious message.
- **1955** *Good Country People* – in the rural Georgia, Mrs Hopewell runs her family farm with the help of tenants Mr and Mrs Freeman. Mrs Hopewell's daughter, Joy, who got her leg shot off in an accident when she was a child, has changed her name to "Hulga," and lives at the state of annoyed anger at her mother and Mrs Freeman. A Bible salesman comes to her door, she wants to seduce him. The next day, Manley manages to persuade her to take off her glasses and then her wooden leg which he packs in a suitcase. He tells her that he collects prostheses from the disabled. She's shocked to realize that he's not "good country people."
- **1965** *The Lame Shall Enter First* – the main character Sheppard has little sympathy to his ten-year-old son, Norton, who, in his view, lacks brains and empathy for others. Instead, he prefers fourteen-year-old miscreant Rufus Johnson, whom he had been trying to help at the reformatory. The boy rejects the help. Norton is told that his mother is in Heaven and he will see her if he dies. The boy hangs himself.
- **1952** *Wise Blood* - Recently discharged from service in World War II and surviving on a government pension for unspecified war wounds, Hazel Motes returns to his family home in Tennessee to find it abandoned. Leaving behind a note claiming a chifforobe as his private property, Motes boards a train for Taulkinham.
- **1960** *The Violent Bear It Away* - the story of Francis Tarwater, a fourteen-year-old boy who is trying to escape his destiny: the life of a prophet.
- **Themes**: struggle for redemption in ourselves, search for God, violence, macabre, mental disease.
- Comedies and grotesque, but there's always deep philosophical religious feeling in her writing.
- Aggressive approach to readers.

### **Southern Gothic:**

- Faulkner – as a comical means
- Caldwell – to show how terrible the South was
- O'Connor – about religion

### **Carson McCullers 1917-1967**

- Similar to Flannery O'Connor: grotesque, Gothic, physical disfigurement.
- "My theme is the spiritual isolation."
- Sympathetic towards her characters.
- **Themes**: longing for love, loneliness, sexuality, physical and mental disfigurement.
- **1951** *The Ballad of the Sad Café* – the story introduces Miss Amelia Evans, a strong character of both body and mind, who is approached by a hunchbacked man with only a suitcase in hand who claims to be of kin. They open a café to which everybody comes.
- **1946** *The Member of the Wedding* - the story of 12-year-old tomboy Frankie Addams, who feels disconnected from the world; in her words, an "unjoined person."
  - Theme: confusion of growing up, the pain of adolescence.
- Compassionate individual characters.

## AMERICAN THEATRE

- History:
  - Colonial times: theatre banned by Puritans
  - 19<sup>th</sup> century: theatre as a low kind of entertainment
- Typical American form:
  - **Minstrel show** – showing black people with all their comical attributes, whites were playing in whiteface, because blacks were not allowed to play.

### Eugene O'Neill 1888-1953

- A “father of the American theatre.”
- Major aim of his life: to write a tragedy that would be American.
- Interest in psychology.
- Naturalistic themes: how people are trapped in their lives.
- He was Irish. His father was a one-role actor, his mother was a Catholic very attached to the ornament of religion.
- **1936 Nobel Prize**
- He suffered from severe depression.
- **Experiments**:
  - Expressionism and naturalism,
  - Psychology and psychoanalysis,
  - Philosophy of Nietzsche,
  - References to the Bible and classical myth,
  - Plenty of symbols,
  - He often relies on sound and light,
  - Philosophy of existentialism – we are all alone.
- His biggest achievement: none of his plays resemble another one.
- **1920 *The Emperor Jones*** - the tale of Brutus Jones, an African-American man who kills a man, goes to prison, escapes to a Caribbean island, and sets himself up as emperor. The play recounts his story in flashbacks as Brutus makes his way through the forest in an attempt to escape former subjects who have rebelled against him.
  - The hero is black.
  - Expressionistic device: the use of drums accompanying his escape.
- **1922 *The Hairy Ape*** - about a brutish, unthinking labourer known as Yank as he searches for a sense of belonging in a world controlled by the rich. At first Yank feels secure as he stokes the engines of an ocean liner, and is highly confident in his physical power over the ship's engines. However, when the weak but rich daughter of an industrialist in the steel business refers to him as a "filthy beast," Yank undergoes a crisis of identity. He leaves the ship and wanders into Manhattan, only to find he does not belong anywhere. Finally he is reduced to seeking a kindred being with the gorilla in the zoo and dies in the animal's embrace.
  - Theme: loneliness, not fitting anywhere.
- **1925 *Desire Under the Elms*** – a widower Ephraim abandons his New England farm to his three sons, who hate him but share his greed. Eben, the youngest and brightest sibling, feels the farm is his birth right, as it originally belonged to his mother. He buys out his half-brothers' shares of the farm with money stolen from his father, and Peter and Simeon head off to California to seek their fortune. Ephraim returns with a new wife, the beautiful and headstrong Abbie, who enters into an adulterous affair with Eben. Soon after, Abbie bears Eben's child, but lets Ephraim believe that the child is his, in the hopes of securing her future with the farm. Madly in love with Eben and fearful it would become an obstacle to their relationship, Abbie kills the infant. An enraged and distraught Eben turns Abbie over to the sheriff, but not before admitting to himself the depths of his love for her and thus confessing his own role in the infanticide.
- **Greek tragedy**:
  - Universal order which is disturbed by the hero;
  - Inevitability – you cannot change the fate;
  - Tragic hero believes that he can change the world but he always makes a mistake and he accepts the punishment;
  - Catharsis – the evil gets punished.
- **1928 *Strange Interlude*** - the plot centres on Nina Leeds who is devastated when her adored fiancé is killed in World War I. Nina embarks on a series of sordid affairs before determining to marry an amiable fool, Sam Evans. While she is pregnant with Sam's child, she learns a horrifying secret, insanity runs in the Evans family and could be inherited by any child of Sam's. She will abort Sam's child and conceive a child with the physician Ned Darrell, letting Sam believe that it is his.
  - 9 acts and it lasts for 6,5 hours with one break only.
  - “Magnificent failure of American theatre.”

- **Pulitzer Prize**
- **1925 *Lazarus Laughed*** - The story features characters and events following the raising of Lazarus of Bethany from the dead by Jesus.
  - Reference to Greek tragedy: chorus, members of the chorus wear masks representing 7 ages of man and 7 kinds of people.
  - Affirmation of laugh.
- **1929 *Dynamo*** - a conflict between the Lights and the Fives that is marked by their religious differences and has soured into personal hatred.
  - Symbol of something that replaced Christianity.
  - A modern man rejects God and turns to a different personification of God – female machine Dynamo.
- **1931 *Mourning Becomes Electra*** - a retelling of the Oresteia by Aeschylus.
  - The characters parallel characters from the ancient Greek play.
  - Reference to Greek mythology, Freud and Jung.
  - Theme: relations in the family.
  - Modern psychological play.
- Optimistic plays:
  - **1933 *Ah, Wilderness!*** - focuses on the Miller family, the main plot deals with the middle son, 16-year-old Richard, and his coming of age.
  - **1934 *Days Without End***
    - Can God forgive us? Can wife forgive the man who has sinned against her? – Yes.
    - The modern miracle play.
- **1946 *The Iceman Cometh*** – set in Harry Hope's decidedly downmarket Greenwich Village saloon and rooming house, in 1912. The patrons, who are all men except for three female prostitutes, are all dead-end alcoholics. They drift without purpose from day to day, coming fully to life only during the semi-annual visits of the salesman Theodore Hickman.
  - About our wish to escape to our dreams.
  - “Someday, I’ll kill my wife.”
- **1941/1953 *Long Day’s Journey into Night*** – The action covers a fateful, heart-rending day from around 8:30 am to midnight, in August 1912 at the seaside Connecticut home of the Tyrones - the semi-autobiographical representations of O’Neill himself, his older brother, and their parents at their home, Monte Cristo Cottage.
  - Theme: addiction, dysfunction of the family.
  - O’Neill is portrayed as the boy who has tuberculosis.
  - All of the characters hate one another, however, they still love each other.
  - Very personal, emotional play.
  - **1957** He received posthumously **Pulitzer Prize for Drama**.
- Weaknesses of O’Neill:
  - Possibly unnatural language (not the 20<sup>th</sup> century everyday language);
  - Melodramatic plots: plenty of deaths, sadness, murders;
  - Very personal, often autobiographical plays;
  - Mainly pessimistic plays;
  - Not about modern world, the modern world is just a setting.

### 1930s: THE RED DECADE

- 1929 American Depression
- The only decade when communism was popularly welcome.
- 1932 A communist candidate for a president, he was supported by intellectuals.
- 1927 The execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, the anarchists who were convicted of murdering two men during an armed robbery of a shoe factory in 1920.
  - Symbol for the prejudice against immigrants.
- The trial of “Scottsboro Nine” – nine black teenaged men were wrongly convicted of raping a white woman in Alabama.
- 1953 The trial of the Rosenbergs who were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage during a time war, and executed, their charges were related to the passing of information about the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union.

### LITERATURE AND ART

- Writing with the intention that simple people could read it.
- **Proletarian literature** – very simple language, simple technique, about a working class.
- Representatives:
  - Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited* (1933)
  - Michael “Mike” Gold, *Jews without Money* (1930)
  - Clara Weatherwax, *Marching! Marching!* (1936)



- Albert Halper, *Union Square* (1933)
- The greatest bestseller: *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell.
  - Escaping to the idealised past.
- Popularity of Disney, *Snow White* (1937)
  - Escaping to a tale.
- Interest in paintings – idealised reality.

### Pearl Buck 1892-1973

- An American writer who spent most of her life until 1934 in China.
- Her novel *The Good Earth* won the **Pulitzer Prize** in **1932**.
  - The life of extremely poor farmers.
  - Escape into matters different to America
- In **1938**, she was awarded the **Nobel Prize in Literature**, "*for her rich and truly epic descriptions of peasant life in China and for her biographical masterpieces.*"
- Common technique: technique of pictures, '**graphic books**' – addition of photographs to many books
  - Magazine *Life* based on pictures
    - Picture essays.

### James Agee 1909-1955

- **1941** *Let Us Now Praise the Famous Men* - a "photographic and verbal record of the daily living and environment of an average white family of tenant farmers."
  - Photographs by **Walker Evans**.
  - Reality presented as it is, no ornamentations.

### John Dos Passos 1896-1970

- *The U.S.A. Trilogy*, 3 parts:
  - 1) **1930** *The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parallel*
  - 2) **1932** *1919*
  - 3) **1937** *The Big Money*
  - Against war, democracy, and crisis.
  - Very modernistic book, all kinds of experiments.
  - Theme: American Dream, reality
  - Form: divided into parts
    - First type of narration: conventional story of a boy who comes from War.
  - Modernistic innovations:
    - (a) **Newsreel** – something that came from press, it appears at the beginnings of the chapters, scraps of articles to give the sense that it's real (documentary type).
    - (b) **The camera eye** – spoken in 1<sup>st</sup> person, stream of consciousness, plenty of autobiographical passages.
    - (c) **Biographies** – chapters with biographies of famous people.

### John Steinbeck 1902-1968

- Writing about California landscape and Mexicans.
- **1962 Nobel Prize**
- **1940 Pulitzer Prize**
- **1945** *Cannery Row* - takes place on a street lined with sardine fisheries in Monterey known as Cannery Row. It revolves around the people living there during the Great Depression.
  - Steinbeck's alter ego – a Doc.
- **1935** *Tortilla Flat* - a group of paisanos - literally, countrymen - a small band of errant friends enjoying life and wine in the days after the end of the Great War.
  - \* **Those are a sort of local colour novels.**
- **1937** *Of Mice and Men* - the tragic story of George Milton and Lennie Small, two displaced migrant ranch workers, who move from place to place in search of new job opportunities during the Great Depression in California, USA.
- **1952** *East of Eden* - brings to life the intricate details of two families, the Trasks and the Hamiltons, and their interwoven stories.
  - Interest in the Bible: story of Cain and Abel.
  - Combined Christianity and socialism.
- **1939** *The Grapes of Wrath* - Set during the Great Depression, the novel focuses on the Joads, a poor family of tenant farmers driven from their Oklahoma home by drought, economic hardship, and changes in financial and agricultural industries. Due to their nearly hopeless situation, and in part

because they were trapped in the Dust Bowl<sup>11</sup>, the Joads set out for California. Along with thousands of other "Okies", they sought jobs, land, dignity, and a future.

\* **3 most politically influential novels: Harriet B. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.**

○ Themes:

- The archetype of American westward movement – the Joad family moves from Oklahoma to California.
- California disappoints the Joads, it's really the promised land; American Dream is not for everybody.
- Ideology: the combination of Christianity and socialism.
  - Jim Casy (J.C.) - A former preacher who lost his faith after fornicating with willing members of his church numerous times, and from his perception that religion has no solace or answer for the difficulties the people are experiencing. He is a Christ-like figure.
- All characters are the didactic types.
  - Lesson of the dog and the cat – the cat doesn't join the leaving people, it survives in the woods, whereas the dog goes with people and it gets his by another car (the civilization kills him).
  - Turtle gets out of the bag and is not caught by a man – you can crash common people but they'll slowly go on.
  - Animals as examples for humans.
  - Women and men
    - Steinbeck loved women, he believed they were much stronger and could not be broken.
    - Father takes care of family and mother stands back, but when everything goes bad, the man breaks down, his wife is stronger.
  - Rose and her husband make love at night, at the same time the grandma dies – cycle of life and death.
  - Rose breastfeeding a starving man – we have to help one another.
- Very propagandistic, sentimental, and influential novel.
- Modernistic ornamentations: every few chapters about other things not connected with the plot – documentary chapters that are called **interchapters**.
- **1963 *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*** – a travelogue that depicts a road trip around the United States made by Steinbeck, in the company of his French standard poodle, Charley.
  - Non-fiction
- He became very conservative and he supported the Vietnam War.

### ***FREAKS IN LATE MODERNIST AMERICAN CULTURE* (NANCY BOMBACI, 2005)**

— The outsiders of the 1930s.

#### **Nathanael West 1903-1940**

- From Jewish family, but he was anti-Semitic.
- **1934 *Miss Lonelyhearts*** - Miss Lonelyhearts is an unnamed male newspaper columnist writing and advice column which the newspaper staff considers a joke. As Miss Lonelyhearts reads letters from desperate New Yorkers, he feels terribly burdened and falls into a cycle of deep depression, accompanied by heavy drinking and occasional bar fights.
  - West mixes funny with terrible, comedy with terror.
- He loves American clichés, he subverts them into monstrous dimensions.
- Pity and contempt for victims.
- **1939 *The Day of the Locust*** - a young man named Tod Hackett who thinks of himself as a painter and artist, but who works in Hollywood as a costume designer and background painter. He falls in love with Faye Greener, an aspiring starlet who lives nearby.
  - Very grotesque.
  - Hollywood presented as a macabre cemetery of American Dreams, everything is fake, artificial and monstrous. Everything turns into masquerade.
  - Everything is ugly and violent, the reader doesn't know if it is real or not.

#### **Djuna Barnes 1892-1983**

- One of the most notable American writers.
- T.S. Eliot compared her to Elizabethan tragedy.
- She mixes trivial with tragic, difficult style, complex structures.

<sup>11</sup> Dust Bowl - a period of severe dust storms causing major ecological and agricultural damage to American and Canadian prairie lands in the 1930s.

- **1936 *Nightwood*** - focuses on Robin Vote, a woman in constant search of "secure torment." Robin's story begins in Europe, where she meets, and marries the false Baron Felix Volkbein, who wants nothing more than an heir to carry on his family name and uphold the traditions of old European nobility. The birth of their son, Guido, causes Robin to realize that she does not wish to carry on this life. She moves to America, where she begins a romantic relationship with Nora Flood.
  - High Modernism
  - The feeling of grotesque.
  - The man falls in love with a woman who leaves him for her lesbian lover.
  - Narrator as a character.
  - Surrealistic novel.
  - Theme: nostalgia for love.

### **Richard Wright 1908-1960**

- Black writer.
- He despised Harlem Renaissance – the blacks wrote for the white people.
- Revolutionary, he was into improving the position of black people.
- **1938 *Uncle Tom's Children*** – five short stories.
  - Very violent, several scenes of lynching.
  - Unconsciously he did the same thing as Stowe.
- **1940 *Native Son*** - the story of 20-year-old Bigger Thomas, a black American youth living in utter poverty. Bigger lived in a poor area on Chicago's South Side in the 1930s.
  - Wright wanted the readers to be frightened of his character.
  - Bigger is a monster because white people made him so.
    - He's brutal, uneducated.
  - Naturalistic book about instincts (fear, food, and sex).
    - Sexual hints – he masturbates in the cinema, the girl behaving in a too provocative way (these scenes were cut out but now they are restored).
  - Communist ideology
    - Bigger's lawyer is a communist.
  - Hypocrisy: Mr Dalton is the owner of the slum where the black people live, he takes horribly high rents from them.
- Comparison to Steinbeck – we have to work together, the white working class and black people.

### **Ralph Ellison 1914-1994**

- Black writer of the 1950s.
- **1952 *Invisible Man*** - autobiographically narrated in the first person by the protagonist, an unnamed African American man who considers himself socially invisible.
  - Problem of black people who have no place where they belong to.

### **POST-WORLD WAR II THEATRE**

- 1931-1939 **Federal Theatre Project** - a New Deal project to fund theatre and other live artistic performances in the United States during the Great Depression.
- Very short performances by amateurs and professionals, short sketches to entertain the audience. It was not too complex.

### **MOST RECOGNIZABLE PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY:**

#### **Tennessee Williams 1911-1983**

- **1948 and 1955** he received two **Pulitzer Prizes**
- Themes:
  - Homosexuality.
  - South as the place that is unhappy, it's left behind. He loves it and he hates it. Prejudiced and violent South.
  - Women; very often very complex characters who don't follow one pattern.
  - Relationships between lovers, within the family, friendships.
  - Dream and reality – we have to have both.
  - Body and soul – pairing characters representing these motifs.
- He was open about his homosexuality. He always said that was perversion, he appeared to be ashamed.
- Compassion for every character, "*Nothing disgusts me unless it is unkind or violent.*" (from *The Night of the Iguana*, 1961).
- **1961 *The Night of the Iguana*** - In 1940s Mexico, an ex-minister, Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, has been locked out of his church after characterizing the Occidental image of God as a "senile delinquent", during one of his sermons. Shannon is not de-frocked, but institutionalized for a "nervous

breakdown". Sometime after his release, Rev. Shannon obtains employment as a tour guide for a second-rate travel agency. Shortly before the opening of the play, Shannon is accused of having committed statutory rape of a sixteen-year old girl, named Charlotte Goodall, who is accompanying his current group of tourists.

- Plenty of weirdoes.
- Iguana: young kids catch it and tie it to a post and they want to eat it the next day. They will kill it with variations just to see how the animal dies.
  - Cruelty is in us.
- Technique: Expressionism, a lot of light and sound effects, some experiments on stage.
- **1944** *The Glass Menagerie* - The play is introduced to the audience by Tom, the narrator and protagonist, as a memory play based on his recollection of his mother Amanda and his sister Laura.
  - Themes:
    - Outsider – a young girl who is crippled, she's obsessively shy. Her only toy is the glass menagerie.
    - South – a Southern mother of two children, she gets on everybody's nerves, she always wants the best for her children.
- **1945** *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* - the story of a Southern family in crisis, especially the husband and wife, Brick and Margaret, and their interaction with Brick's family over the course of one evening gathering at the family estate in Mississippi.
  - Themes:
    - South;
    - Relationships within the family.
- **1947** *A Streetcar Named Desire* - Blanche DuBois is a fading, but still-attractive, Southern belle whose pretensions to virtue and culture only thinly mask alcoholism and delusions of grandeur. Her poise is an illusion she presents to shield others from her reality, and an attempt to make herself still attractive to new male suitors.
  - Themes:
    - South;
    - Women of the South – the struggle between the immigrant and the southern lady, primitive wins and the lady is sent to the insanity hospital.
- **1959** *Sweet Bird of Youth* - the story of a gigolo and drifter, Chance Wayne, who returns to his home town as the accompaniment of a faded movie star, Princess Kosmonopolis, whom he hopes to use to help him break into the movies.

#### Arthur Miller 1915-2005

- He sided with the communists in the 1930s.
- In 1950s, when the communist fans were persecuted, he was called to appear before House Comity on an American Comities, he couldn't stage his plays for two years.
- **1949** *Death of a Salesman* - Willy Loman returns to his home in Brooklyn one night, exhausted from a failed sales trip. His wife, Linda, tries to persuade him to ask his boss, Howard Wagner, to let him work in New York so that he won't have to travel.
  - Theme:
    - Failure of the American Dream, corporations can dream, not an individual;
    - We are imperfect.
  - It is the most important thing to succeed, even if you have to cheat.
  - "A tragedy of a little man" – protagonist's name is Loman (an oxymoron, tragedy cannot be of a little man but of a great hero).
- **1953** *The Crucible* - a dramatization of the Salem witch trials that took place in the Province of Massachusetts Bay during 1692 and 1693.
  - an allegory of McCarthyism, when the U.S. government blacklisted accused communists.

#### Edward Albee born 1928

- **1958** *The Zoo Story* – a one-act play that concerns two characters, Peter and Jerry. Peter is a middle-class publishing executive with a wife, two daughters, two cats and two parakeets. Jerry is an isolated and disheartened man. These men meet on a park bench in New York City's Central Park. Jerry is desperate to have a meaningful conversation with another human being. He intrudes on Peter's peaceful state by interrogating him and forcing him to listen to stories like *The Story of Jerry and the Dog*, and the reason behind his visit to the zoo.
  - Theatre of the absurd.
  - Themes: isolation, loneliness, miscommunication as anathematization, social disparity and dehumanization in a commercial world.
- **1962** *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* – examines the breakdown of the marriage of a middle-aged couple, Martha and George. After a university faculty party, they receive an unwitting younger

couple, Nick and Honey, as guests late one evening and draw them into their bitter and frustrated relationship.

- 3 acts.
- Title: the pun on the song *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?* from Walt Disney's *Three Little Pigs*.
- About women – the professors are only men, women want to win and humiliate men.
- Americans as the most corrupted and demoralised nation.

### **August Wilson 1945-2005**

- A black playwright.
- **1987 and 1990 Pulitzer Prizes for Drama.**
- *The Pittsburgh Cycle* – a set of ten plays which are set in a different decade and aim to sketch the Black experience in the 20th century and "raise consciousness through theatre" and echo "the poetry in the everyday language of black America".
  - Theme: casual problems of blacks.

### **Luis Valdez born 1940**

- The father of Chicano theatre<sup>12</sup> in the United States.
- **1979 Zoot Suit** - a fictionalized version of the real-life Sleepy Lagoon murder trial – when a group of Chicano youths were charged with a murder that they did not commit – and the Zoot Suit Riots.

### **Sam Shepard born 1943**

- **1979 Pulitzer Prize for Drama**
- **1972 *The Tooth of Crime*** – a musical play about an aging rock singer Hoss, doing battle with rival Crow.
  - All the violence is through the music.
- **1978 *Buried Child*** - a piece of theatre which depicts the fragmentation of the American nuclear family in a context of disappointment and disillusionment with American mythology and the American dream, the 1970s rural economic slowdown and the breakdown of traditional family structures and values.
  - Direct echoes with Virginia Woolf and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*.

### **1940s/1950s**

- WWII is over
- **Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944** – a public law, popularly known as the G.I. Bill, that provided benefits for veterans. Its main provisions were education and training benefits; loan guaranties for a home, farm, or business; unemployment pay; job-finding assistance; and military review of dishonourable discharges.

### **WAR NOVELS**

#### **Norman Mailer 1923-2007**

- **1969 and 1980 Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction and Non-fiction.**
- **1946 *The Naked and the Dead*** – a novel based on Mailer's experiences with the 112<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment during the Philippines Campaign in WWII.
  - No emotions or exaggerations.
  - No women characters.
  - Theme: how people behave in the war
    - Violent language, pressure, instinct, will to survive
  - Strong but not sadistic.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient narrator.
  - Traditional elements: chronological events.
  - Modernistic elements:
    - 'chorus of soldiers'
      - Interchapters – dialogues about soldiers, comical and entertaining, to lighten the atmosphere.
    - Every character's life is presented from before the war.

#### **James Jones 1921-1977**

- World War II fiction
- **1951 *From Here to Eternity*** - loosely based on Jones' experiences in the pre-World War II Hawaiian Division's 27th Infantry and the unit in which he served, Company E ("The Boxing Company").

<sup>12</sup> Chicano theatre – referring to the Mexicans who grew up in the United States.

- Pearl Harbour just before the Japanese attack.
- Graphic, extreme and sentimental.

### **Irwin Shaw 1913-1984**

- A prolific American playwright, screenwriter, novelist, and short-story author.
- **1948** *The Young Lions* - about three soldiers in World War II. Christian Diestl is at first a sympathetic German drawn to Nazism by despair for his future but willing to sacrifice Jews if necessary; Noah Ackerman is an American Jew facing discrimination of the American kind; and Michael Whitacre is an American WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) who struggles with his lack of meaning arising from his lack of struggles.
  - Reference to Poles when they fight in England
  - Very courageous.

### **CULTURE OF 1950s:**

- **McCarthyism** - the practice of making accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence. It also means "the practice of making unfair allegations or using unfair investigative techniques, especially in order to restrict dissent or political criticism."
  - "I have a list of 200 communists who work in USA."
- Communism seen as pure evil.
- 1953 Julius and Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg executed for spying for communists.
  - A sign of distrust for the migrating.
- After WWII, women came back from factories
  - **Emancipation of women**
- The most conservative and prosperous times; men were working and women stayed at home.
- Baby boom: 30% of population; Great family values.
- The invention of vinyl and plastic.
- Alienation – being alone in the world.
- No class struggle.

**1930s:** Marxism

**1950s:** Freudian theories, psychoanalysis

### **E.L. Doctorow born 1931**

- Historical fiction
- **1971** *The Book of Daniel* – loosely based on the lives, trial and execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Doctorow tells the story of Paul and Rochelle Isaacson (corollaries to the Rosenbergs) through the persons of their older son, Daniel, and his sister, Susan, who are college students deeply involved in 1960s politics.
  - Psychological novel.
- **1975** *Ragtime* – primarily set in the New York City area from about 1900 until the United States entry into World War I in 1917. A unique adaptation of the historical narrative genre with a subversive 1970's slant, the novel blends fictional and actual historical figures into a framework that revolves around events, characters and ideas important in American history.
  - Historical metafiction
  - Historical and fictional characters are mixed.

### **Dr Benjamin Spock 1903-1998**

- A paediatrician.
- **1946** *Baby and Child Care* – one of the biggest best-sellers of all time.
  - A manual on baby and child care.
  - A symbol of 1950s.

**1930s** - CLASS STRUGGLE; THE DECADE OF WAR NOVELS; NATURALISM;

**1940s** – NOT VERY DISTINCT IN AMERICAN LITERATURE;

**1950s** – MORE EXISTENTIALISM THAN NATURALISM; FREUDIAN AND FAMILY THEMES.

### **Jerome D. Salinger 1919-2010**

- He refused to be a celebrity.
- **1953** *Nine Stories* – a collection of short stories about suicide and lack of communication.
  - Very gloomy.
- **1961** *Franny and Zooey* - Franny and Zooey, a sister and brother both in their twenties, are the two youngest members of the Glass family.

- **1951 *The Catcher in the Rye*** - set around the 1950s and is narrated by a young man named Holden Caulfield. Holden is not specific about his location while he's telling the story, but he makes it clear that he is undergoing treatment in a mental hospital or sanatorium. The events he narrates take place in the few days between the end of the fall school term and Christmas, when Holden is sixteen years old.
  - Themes:
    - Youthful misfit as a representation of innocence, youth in rebellion;
    - The road, movement;
    - Mental illness as a form of social maladjustment;
    - Alienation → 1950s theme;
    - Disengagement;
    - Insanity – he's talking to the doctor (the implied reader), he agrees to the mental therapy in order to fit the world.
  - Main character: Holden Caulfield; he doesn't fit anywhere, an outsider, he idealizes his girlfriends. Not a typical teenager.
    - Holden makes a trip to New York where he meets various people, he's fascinated with the children's innocence.
    - He does not trust adults, he trusts only innocent people.
    - All adults fail him somehow, they all want something from him.
      - Holden's brother sold his talent,
      - Mr Antolini is liked by Holden until he tries to molest the boy.
    - Holden rebels against everything, he's judgemental and intolerant, but he's also very sincere.
    - He hates snobbish people although he's snobbish himself.
  - **Similarity to *Huckleberry Finn*: all adults fail the protagonist because of their ethical problems.**
  - Characteristics:
    - Jokes characteristic for the times,
    - 1950s slang.
  - Symbolism:
    - Christianity
      - Christmas setting,
      - Holden as a Christ-like figure,
      - He's fascinated with the innocent, he's punished unjustly, people reject him,
      - He sacrifices himself for his little sister – his crucifixion.
  - Late Modernism / Postmodernism:
    - Intertextuality,
    - Metafiction – borrowing characters from different books, i.e. David Copperfield is mentioned,
    - Bildungsroman – Holden is David Copperfield.

### Vladimir Nabokov 1899-1977

- 1940 He came to the USA.
- He's an American writer.
- **1954/1966 *Speak, Memory*** – an autobiographical memoir; the first twelve chapters describe Nabokov's remembrance of his youth in an aristocratic family living in pre-revolutionary Saint Petersburg and at their country estate Vyra, near Siverskaya; the three remaining chapters recall his years at Cambridge and as part of the Russian émigré community in Berlin and Paris.
- **1955 *Lolita*** - the protagonist and unreliable narrator, middle-aged literature professor and hebephile<sup>13</sup> Humbert Humbert, is obsessed with the 12-year-old Dolores Haze, with whom he becomes sexually involved after he becomes her stepfather.
  - **1939 *The Enchanter*** – a novella that deals with the ephebophilia of the protagonist and thus is linked to and presages the Lolita theme.
  - A psychological book about the mentality of a child molester.
  - Nabokov mocks psychoanalysis throughout the book.
    - Humbert might be excused, it was his need to have sex with a teenage girl.
  - **Similar to Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee*: the love of children.**
  - Humbert Humbert goes to a therapist who's really the rapist.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator – Humbert Humbert

<sup>13</sup> Hebephilia – a primary or exclusive sexual interest in pubescent individuals approximately 11–14 years old, approximate because age of onset of puberty varies.

- He does terrible things to the reader.
- He manipulates the reader.
- Style:
  - Very flowery language, not pornographic;
  - \* Nabokov coined the word 'nymphet'<sup>14</sup>;
  - 'Beauty and the beast' point of view;
  - Plenty of euphemisms
    - "Lolita's morning duty."
- The narrator convinces the reader that what he does is completely right:
  - He quotes *Annabel Lee*,
  - Literature: Dante and Petrarch loved little girls (classical examples),
  - It was Lolita who seduced him, he's even scandalized that she's not a virgin at the age of 12,
  - He develops her mind and he teaches her.
- "It's a love affair with language."
- Lolita was Nabokov's favourite character
  - She achieves something that is almost impossible, she runs away.
- Everything is literature – it starts with a foreword and afterword.
- Lolita – typical character of the 1950s.
- Themes:
  - Love-hate relationship with America – America as wasteland, dirty and polluted;
  - A road.
- Characteristics:
  - Psychology – parody of Freud,
  - Symbolism – America as wasteland, Europe as corruption,
    - Humbert (Europe) tries to corrupt Lolita (America),
  - Morality – question of love,
  - Anti-novel
  - Metafiction
  - Allusions and parodic names
    - therapist Vivian Darkbloom – the letters stand for Vladimir Nabokov
    - numbers are similar – only to bother the reader
- **1957 *Pnin*** – the novel's eponymous protagonist, Timofey Pavlovich Pnin, is a Russian-born professor living in the United States. At Waindell, Pnin has settled down to an uncertain, untenured, but semi-respectable academic life, full of various tragicomic mishaps, misfortunes, and difficulties adjusting to American life and language.
  - Irony – distaste for things final and tragic.
  - The reader feels sorry for Pnin.
  - Theme: things can get fixed, America is too sterile.
  - Nabokov makes metafiction allusions, he's the narrator and the negative character who took Pnin's wife and his job.

### John Updike 1932-2009

- Novels about a Rabbit:
  - **1960** *Rabbit, Run*
  - **1971** *Rabbit Redux*
  - **1981** *Rabbit Is Rich*
  - **1988** *Rabbit At Rest*
    - **Harry 'Rabbit' Angstrom** – an average American with no special education nor job, he's boring and not interesting.
    - Themes:
      - Male protest against being trapped in marriage;
      - Refusal to enter maturity;
      - Freudian critique of the sacrifices that make civilization possible;
      - Christian dream of unfallen perfection.
    - Marriage is having man's wings clipped. Marriage stands for adulthood and civilization.
    - **Similar to Huckleberry Finn and Holden Caulfield.**
    - Angstrom runs away and starts to live with a prostitute Ruth.
    - A Reverend – he tries to mend Harry and his wife's broken marriage.
      - A very good character that might be the most negative one.

<sup>14</sup> Nymphet – a sexually attractive girl, or a woman.



- A Christian version of a road novel about rebellion.
- **1984** *The Witches of Eastwick*
- **1982 and 1991** He received **Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction**.

### Ken Kesey 1935-2001

- **1962** *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* - Set in an Oregon psychiatric hospital, the narrative serves as a study of the institutional processes and the human mind as well as a critique of Behaviourism and a celebration of humanistic principles.
  - Very stereotypical characters
    - **Like in Flannery O'Connor.**
  - Theme: male protest against being domesticated.
  - Setting: mental hospital, male world guarded by a nurse Ratched
  - All the men are crazy because of demands made by female.
  - Characters:
    - **Chief Bromden** – half-Native American narrator, he pretends to be deaf and mute; his mother wanted to civilize his father.
    - **Nurse Ratched** – the tyrannical head nurse of the mental institution, who exercises near-total control over those in her care, including her subordinates.
    - **Randle McMurphy** - A rebellious convict sent from a normal prison. He is guilty of battery and gambling. He had also been charged with, but never convicted of, statutory rape.
      - “A mythic American maleness personified.”
      - Two ways how to rescue the men:
        - Fishing,
        - Real good women (prostitutes).
    - Nature (men) against civilization (women).
    - Lobotomy – victory of civilization; McMurphy has cut out part of his brain.
    - Criticism:
      - the word ‘committed’ – men are committed to the mental hospital; teenage fantasy of an unrealistic freedom; connection with the word ‘commitment’ – a book against commitment and being responsible.
      - Masculine men in American literature have to be crude and rude. In Europe, men don't have to be rude to be manly.
  - **1964** *Sometimes a Great Notion* – the story involves an Oregon family of gypso loggers who cut and procure trees for a local mill in opposition to striking, unionized workers.
    - Style: sometimes stream of consciousness, sometimes Faulknerian stream
    - Characters are not stereotypical.
    - Naturalistic description of American northeast – how damp and rotten everything is.
    - Aspects:
      - Freudian: struggle for the same woman by two half-brothers.
      - Ethical: respect for nature, friendship and love, sensuality.
  - **1992** *Sailor Song* - details the lives of the residents of Kuinak, a small town in Alaska. It is a quiet, small fishing town, until a Hollywood movie crew come to shoot a scene and transform the town.
    - **Postmodern**
    - Kesey plays with the reader; lack of coherence, not everything is important.
    - Mixture of seriousness and parody.
    - Themes are very traditional:
      - Love;
      - Bad guys destroying the environment;
      - Aspect of fairy tale – miraculous survival of the hero.

**1950s**: terrible in politics, no social problems, repressive towards women and also towards men.

Literature of the 1950s: a lot of criticism, books that were very long forbidden are published.

### Simone de Beauvoir 1908-1986

- **1949** *The Second Sex* - deals with the treatment of women throughout history and is often regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second-wave feminism.

**POETRY**

Very sad and depressive poets.

**John Berryman 1913-1972**

- One of the saddest 20<sup>th</sup>-century poets, very tormented.
- **1956** *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*
  - He pays respect to the poets who were neglected and marginalised, he uncovered them.
- **1964** *Dream Songs* – a compilation of two books of poetry: *77 Dream Songs* and *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest*.
  - 385 individual poems.
- He became very religious at the end of his life (**like T.S. Eliot**). He was mentally ill.

**CONFESSIONAL POETRY**

Up to 1950-60s: poetry has to be distant, unsentimental, ironic, objective, with understatements.

**New Critics** - intentional fallacy – we cannot interpret the poem by what the poet had in mind, his intentions don't matter.

**High Modernism**

**Confessional Poetry** is rebellious, intensively private feelings, exaggerations, hyperboles, shocking and embarrassing topics.

Autobiographical poems in the sense of the life of the spirit.

Freudian theme: parents contributing to the bad life we have.

**Robert Lowell 1917-1977**

- Family of poets:
  - James Russell Lowell (Fireside Poet, 19<sup>th</sup> century)
  - Amy Lowell (Imagist, 'amygism')
- **1947 and 1974 Pulitzer Prize**
- Maniac depressive, he was stabilised by lithium, he died of heart attack.
- Topic: his tormented memories of childhood, intimate psychological self-analysis.
- **1946** *Mr Edwards and the Spider*
  - Reference to Puritanism.
  - The spider is the devil.
  - Mr Edwards – preacher Jonathan Edwards

**Anne Sexton 1928-1974**

- Characteristics: dark, bitter, personal poetry.
- **1969** *To My Lover Returning to His Wife*
  - Theme: tenderness and jealousy.
- **1967 Pulitzer Prize**

**Sylvia Plath 1932-1963**

- **1982 Pulitzer Prize**
- 1<sup>st</sup> stage influenced by New Criticism:
  - **1961** *Mirror*
    - A distant poem.
- **Hysterical poetry** influenced by Confessional Poetry:
  - Personal life
  - Tone: mad, screaming
  - Theme: the status of a woman in the 1950s, the politics of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Her hysteria was, in fact, controlled.
  - Exaggerated images: glass eyes, deformed human bodies, vampires, Nazis.
  - **Robert Lowell was her inspiration.**
  - **1962** *Daddy*
    - Rhymes and half-rhymes.
    - She speaks as an adult and as a child.
    - The poem mocks Freud – “*Every woman adores a Fascist.*”
    - She speaks against men and punished status of a woman, against being mentally subdued by patriarchal system.
      - She compares her husband and her father, it's not personal.
    - Topic of death: **Sylvia Plath and Emily Dickinson are accused of being morbid, they talk too much of death.**
      - Almost every poem is about death, it's her way to tame it.

- **1963 *The Bell Jar*** - semi-autobiographical with the names of places and people changed. The book is often regarded as a roman à clef<sup>15</sup>, with the protagonist's descent into mental illness paralleling Plath's own experiences with what may have been clinical depression.
  - Hatred of parents, distasted for the ultra-feminine values and family values
  - Protest novel against the norm.

## THE BEAT GENERATION

Term: J.C. Holmes *Go* (1952)

*"The origins of the word 'beat' are obscure, but the meaning is only too clear to most Americans. More than mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself. A man is beat whenever he goes for broke and wagers the sum of his resources on a single number; and the young generation has done that continually from early youth."*

**Beat** means beautiful, blessed

**Beatnik** – the rebel of the 1950s; a portmanteau on the name of the recent Russian satellite Sputnik and Beat Generation. This suggested that beatniks were (1) "far out of the mainstream of society" and (2) "possibly pro-Communist"

**1950s**: very conservative; great social unrest leading to the revolution of 1960s.

**1954 *Separate but Equal*** - a legal doctrine in United States constitutional law that justified systems of segregation. Under this doctrine, services, facilities and public accommodations were allowed to be separated by race, on the condition that the quality of each group's public facilities was to remain equal.

### Music:

- Little Richard, Chuck Berry
- If you were black, you couldn't place the picture of your face on the album.
- Elvis Presley broke the colour barrier, he sang the black music.
- Jazz music influenced the Beats
  - Grant Davis – be-boppers

### Painting:

- Jackson Pollock – splashing paint onto canvas, energy
  - 1956 He crashed into a tree in his car.

### Film:

- Marlon Brando
- James Dean – 1955 car crash

**Jackson Pollock and James Dean died on the road.**

### Comedy:

- Lenny Bruce
  - He spoke against hypocrisy of the 1950s
  - **1963 *How to Talk Dirty and Influence People***
  - He was the 1<sup>st</sup> who introduced obscenities at the stage, very offensive.

## BEAT LITERATURE

- A bohemian rebellion against established society.
- Freedom of behaviour (sex and drugs) and freedom of expression.
- Dissatisfaction with commercialism.
- Influenced by Buddhism (distaste for violence).

### Lost Generation:

Post-World War I  
Drinking alcohol  
Serious generation  
War veterans

### Beat Generation:

Post-World War II  
Taking drugs  
Apolitical generation  
War veterans  
They don't talk about war.

## Neal Cassady 1926-1968

- A cult figure for intellectuals.
- Energetic, bisexual, responsible.
- Idea of happiness and living to the limit.
- The hero of many books, i.e. *On the Road* as Dean

<sup>15</sup> Roman à clef - a novel about real life, overlaid with a façade of fiction.

- 1964 A trip with Ken Kesey and Tom Wolfe across America, in a bus, to promote Kesey's book and the legal use of LSD.
  - Merry Pranksters - a group of people who formed around American author Ken Kesey in 1964 and sometimes lived communally at his homes in California and Oregon. The group promoted the use of psychedelic drugs. Their motto was "Never Trust a Prankster".
  - Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Cool-Aid Acid Test* memorizes the trip.

**Criticism:** adolescent values, misogynists

The Beats angered the critics – "They worship primitivism."

### **Jack Kerouac 1922-1969**

- His philosophy: Buddhism
- Domineering mother who hated the Beats.
- He couldn't control his life.
- Almost all novels are autobiographical.
- Different names given to his recognisable characters.
- **1952** *On the Road* - based on the travels of Kerouac and his friends across America.
  - **No** moral, intention, nor symbolism.
  - He wanted the novel to be authentic.
  - Values:
    - The joy of living – movement for movement's sake, love, carelessness.
    - Freedom from commitment.
    - The beauty of America
  - **Comparison with *Lolita*: the road as the dirty place, aimless flight, America as kitsch.**
  - Narrator: Kerouac himself; insecure, snobbish, intolerant, a civilized boy.  
**It could be compared to *The Great Gatsby*: 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator, a hero who's a central character, the figure of the hero remains unchanged, the narrator learns something.**
  - Themes:
    - The tradition of America dissent;
    - Prose drained of values, no ideology;
    - Movement;
    - Comparison to a Western;
    - Against stiff civilization.
  - Style invented by Kerouac: **spontaneous prose**
  - Take an object and start sketching around it.
  - You mustn't use punctuation (his favourite were dashes, they resembled pauses in jazz)
  - No selectivity, free associations of the mind.
  - "You satisfy yourself first, then the reader gets your idea."
  - Do not pause to think of proper word.
  - Do not revise, art cannot be improved.
  - Write without consciousness, write in semi-trans.
- **1958** *The Dharma Bums* – the semi-fictional accounts in the novel are based upon events that occurred years after the events of *On the Road*. The main characters are the narrator Ray Smith, based on Kerouac, and Japhy Ryder, based on the poet and essayist Gary Snyder, who was instrumental in Kerouac's introduction to Buddhism in the mid-1950s. The book largely concerns duality in Kerouac's life and ideals, examining the relationship that the outdoors, bicycling, mountaineering, hiking and hitchhiking through the West had with his "city life" of jazz clubs, poetry readings, and drunken parties.
  - Extremely accessible style, almost too simple.
- **1958** *The Subterraneans* - a semi-fictional account of his short romance with a black woman named Alene Lee (1931-1991) in San Francisco in 1953.
  - Style: Imagism
    - experimental, stream of consciousness
- **1960** *Tristessa* - based on Kerouac's relationship with a Mexican prostitute (the title character).
  - Style: Imagism
  - Contemplation of certain objects and people in Mexico.
- **1962** *Big Sur* - recounts the events surrounding Kerouac's three brief sojourns to a cabin in Bixby Canyon, Big Sur, owned by Kerouac's friend and Beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti.
  - Atmosphere: negative, dark, very sad
  - Style: realistic
- **1965** *Desolation Angels* - a semi-autobiographical novel which makes up part of his Duluoz Legend. According to the book's foreword, the opening section of the novel is almost directly taken from the

journal he kept when he was a fire lookout on Desolation Peak in the North Cascade mountains of Washington state.

- 1<sup>st</sup> part: Desolation Peak
- 2<sup>nd</sup> part: a trip with a large group of Beats to Mexico
- **1960, 1972 *Visions of Cody*** - The first section of the book is essentially a collection of short stream-of-consciousness essays, which Kerouac called "sketches", many simply describing elements of Duluz's (Kerouac's) post-World War II New York City environment. The second section consists mainly of the transcription of taped conversations between Kerouac and Cassady (and occasionally "Evelyn"—Cassady's last wife, Carolyn and various friends) that extended over five nights as they drank and smoked marijuana.
  - Experimental form of *On the Road*

### **Allen Ginsberg 1926-1997**

- Jewish roots; his father was a minor poet; his mother was a raving communist with mental problems.
- **1956 *Kaddish for Naomi Ginsberg (1894-1956)*** – a poem about his mother and her death.
- He was a serious poet, but his life wasn't serious.
- One of the early gay-men in America who spoke openly about it.
- **He resembles Walt Whitman: he wanted to shock people so they would read about it; he was despised by the mainstream critics; he wrote about America and he was critical about it.**
- **1955 *Howl*** – a protest poem against everything.
  - *Moloch* meaning 'establishment', the worst thing for the Beats.
  - Hymn of Cold War Generation.
- 'Flower power' was a slogan coined by Ginsberg.

### **William Burroughs 1914-1997**

- **1953 *Junkie*** – a semi-autobiographical novel that focuses on Burroughs' life as a drug user and dealer. It has come to be considered a seminal text on the lifestyle of heroin addicts in the early 1950s.
  - "A manual on taking drugs."
- **1959 *Naked Lunch*** - structured as a series of loosely-connected vignettes. Burroughs stated that the chapters are intended to be read in any order. The reader follows the narration of junkie William Lee, who takes on various aliases, from the US to Mexico, eventually to Tangier and the dreamlike Inter-zone.
  - Distressing images
  - Obscene, shocking, sadistic
  - A record of hallucinogenic experience
- He was a heavy drug user.
- He appears in most of Kerouac's novels as Old Bull Lee.
- Trip to Mexico: he shot his wife on a forehead by accident, he was never charged with murder.
- Burroughs became a very conservative and respected citizen.

### **REMEMBER ONE OF THESE:**

#### **Gregory Corso 1930-2001**

- **Less political than Ginsberg and less charismatic than Kerouac.**
- **1960 *The Happy Birthday of Death*** – a collection of poems about the fear of Cold War.
- He dealt with social matters.
- **1959 *Marriage***
  - Very detached, objective, discussing the problems of married state.
- **1959 *Bomb***
  - A "concrete poem" formatted in typed paper slips of verse, arranged in the shape of a mushroom cloud.
- ***Giant Turtle***
  - Purely ecological about the process of laying eggs by a turtle.

#### **Gary Snyder born 1930**

- Life under control from the beginning.
- A real Buddhist monk, he even moved to Japan.
- Snyder also worked at the lookout but he was fired for being accused of being a communist.
- Concerns:
  - Ecological
  - Social – he was against war
- **1975 Pulitzer Prize**
- **1974 *I Went into the Maverick Bar***

- The poem about a cat with references to Japan.

### **Lawrence Ferlinghetti born 1919**

- The co-founder of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers.
- **1958** *A Coney Island of the Mind* – a collection of poetry.
  - *I Am Waiting*
- **1961** *Starting from San Francisco*
  - *Underwear*
    - References to America.

## **POSTMODERNISM**

### **Term:**

- 1) Stylistically experimental writing from 1960s.
- 2) Everything from 1960s until now.

**High Postmodernism** – the most weird literature of the period.

Postmodernism means philosophy, literature and culture.

**Modernism** and **Postmodernism** are not in opposition. Postmodernism is a continuation of a trend.

### **Common issues:**

- Disillusionment;
- Lack of certainty of values;
- Sense that new society is failing (capitalism);
- The style is important, writers pay attention to language and insist on different interpretations;
- Meaning comes through style (Faulkner).
  - **Cult of style started with late Realism (Edith Wharton, Henry James) ~ Pre-modernists.**
- Lack of chronology – a reader must make effort in order to understand, just like in life.

### **Differences:**

#### **Modernism**

- Artists tend to treat themselves very seriously.
- Writing as something holy.
- Ironical towards subjects but serious towards itself.
- Classical values.

#### **Postmodernism**

- Artists joke about everything, seriousness became obsolete.
- Tongue-in-cheek scepticism.
- There are themes that cannot be ridiculed (**Post-Holocaust literature**).
- In danger of total relativism.

**Postmodernism:** feeling that all themes were already said and all new techniques have been used.

Method: **Recycling** – reusing the techniques in a new context.

**1960s:** Postmodern fireworks – nothing is too strange in literature, being as weird as it is possible.

**Metafiction** – a work of fiction in which a major concern is the nature of fiction itself or the process by which fiction is created.

- Author's talking to the reader.
- Giving a few endings to a novel.
- Borrowing characters from different books.
- Rewriting other works of fiction, i.e. Jane Rhys.
- *Lolita*: many numbers similarly used that it traps the reader.
- Depravation of traditional joys of writing.
- Finding something disturbing or comforting is impossible, don't believe in it.

**FROM 1990s ON:** experimentation completely waned.

### **Themes:**

- Disintegration of values.
- Undermining all our beliefs.
- Uncertainty of seriousness or unseriousness.
- Illusion and reality – ambiguity of what is art and what is life, life starts imitating art.
- Mixing history and fantasy.
- Self-referentiality – the inclusion of the writer in the story
  - **Modernism:** 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator is never an author.
  - **Postmodernism:** 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator may be an author or may not, we cannot trust.

- Popular literature and serious literature become mixed.
- Drug culture
  - Trend: **Magical realism** – completely realistic novel introduces an unreal character or event.

### **Tim O'Brien born 1946**

- **1978** *Going After Cacciato* - set during the Vietnam War and is told from the point of view of the protagonist, Paul Berlin. The story traces the events that ensue after Cacciato, a member of Berlin's squad, decides to go AWOL by walking from Vietnam to France, through Asia.
  - Magical realism: platoon goes after a deserter, at one point one of the soldiers says "*I'll let us walk all the way to Paris*" and they do walk there.

### **Roland Barthes 1915-1980**

- **1968** *The Death of the Author* – an essay arguing against traditional literary criticism's practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in an interpretation of a text, and instead argues that writing and creator are unrelated.

### **Ronald Sukenick 1932-2004**

- **1969** *The Death of the Novel* – After Roland Barthes announced the "death of the author", Sukenick carried the metaphor even further in "the death of the novel". He drew up a list of what is missing: reality doesn't exist, nor time or personality. He was widely recognized as a controversial writer who, frequently humorously, questioned and rejected the conventions of traditional fiction-writing. In novels, short stories, literary criticism and history, he often used himself, family members or friends as characters, sometimes quoting them in tape-recorded conversations.
  - Traditional elements of fiction challenged.
  - Authority → scepticism.
  - Seriousness became self-parody of the author.
  - All importance became denied.

### **The Fabulators** – writers who played with the plot and played with the reader.

- Assumption that all plots have been used.
- **Representatives:**
  - Joseph Heller
  - Kurt Vonnegut
  - John Barth
  - Thomas Pynchon

### **Joseph Heller 1923-1997**

- **1961** *Catch-22* - set during World War II in 1943 and is frequently cited as one of the great literary works of the twentieth century.
  - **Title:** a common idiomatic usage meaning "a no-win situation" or "a double bind" of any type.
  - **Theme:** history is always manipulated by politics, business, or Church.
  - **Moral:** Life is the highest value.
    - He calls for thinking of your happiness.
  - Plenty of different characters; nobody is inherently bad, "*Don't give people reasons to be evil.*"
  - **Motif of desertion:** *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, *Civil Disobedience* by Henry David Thoreau
  - He accuses simple people for not respecting life for any reason.
  - **Form** is not traditional:
    - Tragic and vulgar are mixed
    - Elements of grotesque and comedy
  - Number of characters is confusing.
  - Magical realism.

### **Kurt Vonnegut 1922-2007**

- **His predecessor was Mark Twain: cynical, critical towards people, funny novels, simple style.**
- **1959** *The Sirens of Titan* - involves issues of free will, omniscience, and the overall purpose of human history. Much of the story revolves around a Martian invasion of Earth.
  - Science-fiction elements as an ornament.
  - Statements how we should act.
- **1963** *Cat's Cradle* - explores issues of science, technology, and religion, satirizing the arms race and many other targets along the way.
  - High Postmodernism

- Novels borrowed from different epochs.
- It pretends to be historical with historical details.
- Mixing fact and fiction.
- Plot is not chronological.
- Moral motif: life is not something you can treat lightly.
  - *Ice-nine* – a deadly substance, but no one treats it seriously.
- Religion is giving hope
  - Can we lie to make people happy? – No. You have to know the truth.
- We are all responsible for everything totally.
- **1969 *Slaughterhouse Five*** – about World War II experiences and journeys through time of a soldier named Billy Pilgrim.

### John Barth born 1930

- High Postmodernism
- **1968 *Lost in the Funhouse*** – a collection of short stories, each story can be considered complete in itself, and in fact several of them were published separately before being collected. Barth insists, however, on the serial nature of the stories, and that a unity can be found in them as collected.
  - Full of comic event.
  - Narrator retards the narration in order to make the reader irritated.
  - What happens when a writer writes and when a reader reads.
- **1972 *Chimera*** – three loosely connected novellas, *Dunyazadiad*, *Perseid* and *Bellerophoniad*, whose titles refer eponymously to the mythical characters Dunyazad, Perseus and Bellerophon (slayer of the mythical Chimera).
- **1960-1966 *The Sot-Weed Factor*** – a satirical epic of the colonization of Maryland based on the life of an actual poet, Ebenezer Cooke, who wrote a poem of the same title.
  - **Historiographical metafiction** (fictionalised history)
    - The history is looked at from our point of view.
  - Criticism of America.
  - No sentimentalising of history.

### Thomas Pynchon born 1937

- **1965 *The Crying of Lot 49*** – about a woman, Oedipa Maas, possibly unearthing the centuries-old conflict between two mail distribution companies, Trurn und Taxis and the Trystero.
  - Title: reference to an auction.
  - Allusions from literature, history, science.
  - Main character, Oedipa, is trying to make sense out of the world
    - Strong reference to the philosophy of **solipsism** – a painting by Remedios Valo *Grotto* – everything that exists is in our mind.
      - All reality is the function of knowing self, but that self cannot account for its own nature.
  - You should take interests so you don't feel so alone (such as religion, art, love, madness).
  - Oedipa Maas gets an inheritance that tells her she has to discover a secret – postal system.
    - Trystero plan – having a system of communication not governed by the government.
  - Postmodern elements:
    - Motif of conspiracy
    - Mystery story
    - Think to make sense what is America
    - It satirizes everything and everybody
    - It's apparently historical
  - Theme: meaninglessness, solipsism, looking for love
  - Ending: she's sitting at the auction, the book finishes before the lot 49 is cried.
  - Diversity, unprogrammed revolution, it doesn't exist.

**Ideology of exhaustion** – all has already been used, there's nothing new we can come up with. Disappearance of the boundary between literature and non-literature, i.e. fiction and biography (**a fictionalized recall**).

### Norman Mailer 1923-2007

- **1968 *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel/The Novel as History***
  - History is always fictional.



### **Truman Capote 1924-1984**

- **1966** *In Cold Blood* - it details the brutal 1959 murders of Herbert Clutter, a successful farmer from Holcomb, Kansas, his wife, and two of their four children.
  - **New Journalism** – conventional journalism without traditional impersonality, i.e. journalists offer a subjective style, they admit the personal presence and involvement of a human witness.

### **Post-Holocaust literature:**

- Worst fiction comes true.
- What is there to say after the Holocaust and Vietnam?
- Merging the function of
  - A critic – self-consciousness, well written, good style
  - A writer – self-consciousness, technique is very important.

**The Theory** – High Postmodernism got so elaborate that art was lost in it.

- Literary criticism and philosophy became one entity.
  - Feminist critics
  - Psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan)
  - Deconstruction (Jacques Derrida)
- Reader-response criticism – all meaning is created by the reader.

Art reacted in two ways:

- 1) Experimentation – continuation of Modernism, conservative experimentation.
- 2) Traditional writing – radical

**Modernism: *either good or bad***

**Postmodernism: *both masculine and feminine* (no binary opposition).**

**1970s:** people became tired of experimentations:

**1980** *The Death of the Death of the Novel* by Jerome Klinkowitz

**1996** *The Return of the Author* by Eugen Simion

### **Trends of Postmodernism:**

- 1) High Postmodernism (experimentalism)
  - Donald Barthelme
  - John Barth
  - Thomas Pynchon
- 2) Traditional literature (traditionalism)
  - John Updike
  - Vladimir Nabokov
  - Philip Roth
- 3) Woman's fiction
  - Women were considered a different group that was rediscovering what is female; translating female psych onto writing.
  - Susan Sontag
- 2) The writing of minorities: Jews, blacks, gays, etc.

These categories are no longer adequate.

Human condition is not detachable from time and place. The reader takes part in the process of writing.

Return to the traditional ways:

- The aging of experimentalists and the new people did not pick up the style.
- New public attitude.
  - Modernism insisted on ironic distance, openness about sex, aesthetic complexity, challenging the conventional beliefs.

### **MINORITY WRITERS**

**Motto:** First face who you are, even if it appears shameful.

#### **1) JEWISH MINORITIES:**

**They all stresses that some of Jews might to forget about their real roots, but there is always somebody to remind them about it.**

**Bernard Malamud 1914-1986**

- **1957 *The Assistant*** - set in a working-class neighbourhood of Brooklyn, New York, it explores the situation of first- and second-generation Americans in the early 1950s, as experienced by three main characters and the relationships between them: an aging Jewish refugee from Tsarist Russia who owns and operates a failing small grocery store, a young Italian American drifter trying to overcome a bad start in life by becoming the grocer's assistant, and the grocer's daughter, who becomes romantically involved with her father's assistant despite parental objections and misgivings of her own.
  - Being a Jew is a symbol of being a good man.
  - He sympathises with all humans.
  - There are no good or bad characters.
  - Mix of humour and tragedy.
  - **Schlemiel** - an awkward or unlucky person whose endeavours usually fail.
  - Unamerican motifs:
    - Cult of poverty
    - Against the American Dream
    - Novels are for tradition
  - Theme: man gets from God the ability to be good.

#### **Philip Roth born 1933**

- **1969 *Portnoy's Complaint*** - the humorous monologue of "a lust-ridden, mother-addicted young Jewish bachelor," who confesses to his psychoanalyst in "intimate, shameful detail, and coarse, abusive language."
  - Postmodern: about medicine, although it's not a scientific book.
  - Very obscene.
  - Everything is exaggerated.
  - Theme: everyone goes through the ugly stage, don't pretend to be somebody else and accept your roots.
  - The main character hates the fact that he is a Jew, but because of it he ends at the psychiatrist.
  - It seems to ridicule the Jews.

#### **Bernard Malamud**

- Sympathetic towards humanity
- Does not impose Jewish religion
- A book for every human being

#### **Philip Roth**

- Critical
- His message is to Jewish Americans to accept their roots
- Misogynist
- Laughs at everybody
- Freudian novel, satire

- Sex and body of great importance

#### **Saul Bellow 1915-2005**

- **1976 Nobel Prize and Pulitzer Prize**
- **1953 *The Adventures of Augie March*** – it features the eponymous Augie March who grows up during the Great Depression and it is an example of bildungsroman, tracing the development of an individual through a series of encounters, occupations and relationships from boyhood to manhood.

#### **Isaac Bashevis Singer 1902-1991**

- A Polish-born Jewish-American author.
- **1978 Nobel Prize**
- **1978 *Shosha*** - about the aspiring author Aaron Greidinger who lives in the Hasidic quarter of the Jewish neighbourhood of Warsaw during the 1930s.
  - Originally written in Yiddish.

#### **Erica Jong born 1942**

- She has a Chinese husband.
- **1973 *Fear of Flying*** - narrated by its protagonist, Isadora Zelda White Stollerman Wing, a 29-year-old poet who has published two books of poetry. On a trip to Vienna with her second husband, Isadora decides to indulge her sexual fantasies with another man.
  - **Feminism**
    - Main heroine rebels against being feminine.
  - Theme: Being a woman might seem ridiculous, but you have to admit that you are one, don't deny it.
    - **Similar to Philip Roth.**
  - Disgusting and vulgar.

## 2) CHINESE MINORITIES:

**Maxine Hong Kingston born 1940**

- **1975 *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*** – a memoir that can be classified as creative non-fiction. Throughout the five chapters of *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston blends autobiography with old Chinese folktales. What results is a complex portrayal of the 20th Century experiences of Chinese-Americans living in the U.S in the shadow of the Chinese Revolution.
  - Themes:
    - (a) Memoirs of China – a fictionalized recall; a woman get raped and become pregnant, she is forced to commit suicide. In order to punish the village, she drowns herself in the well and ruins the water.
    - (b) Feminism – You can be a warrior if you are a woman.
    - (c) Surviving in America – how to live in a foreign society without losing roots.

**Luis Valdez in his *Zoot Suit* (1979) also includes some features of minority literature.**

- **Chicano culture.**

**Toni Morrison born 1931**

- **1993 Nobel Prize**
- **1988 Pulitzer Prize**
- She's an excellent stylist:
  - Her novels are different stylistically and thematically;
  - Various themes;
  - Her style varies from Realism to Postmodernism;
  - Faulknerian tradition
    - **She's comparable to William Faulkner.**
  - Mixing novelistic forms, such as ghost stories and metafiction.
- Theme: the role of a community and how one fits in a community.
- **1970 *The Bluest Eye*** - about a year in the life of a young black girl, named Pecola, who develops an inferiority complex due to her eye and skin appearance in Lorain, Ohio, against the backdrop of America's Midwest as well as in the years following the Great Depression.
  - In Western tradition exist two myths:
    - The myth of beauty – how a woman should be beautiful.
    - The myth of romantic love
  - “*The tenderness welled up in him, as he sank to his knees... Crawling on all fours toward her, he raised his hand and caught the foot in an upward stroke...His mouth trembled at the firm sweetness of her flesh.*”
    - Very erotic passage.
    - It seems positive, but in fact it is about the father raping his own 11-year-old daughter.
  - Toni Morrison excuses every character in the novel, but she admits that evil is evil.
- **1977 *Song of Solomon*** – it follows the life of Macon "Milkman" Dead III, an African-American male living in Michigan, from birth to adulthood.
  - From a man's point of view.
  - Freudian theme: the point where normality becomes perversity.
- **1973 *Sula*** - the story of Nel Wright and Sula Peace, who meet as children in the small town of Medallion, Ohio. Their devotion is fierce enough to withstand bullies and the burden of a dreadful secret. It endures even after Nel has grown up to be a pillar of the black community and Sula has become a pariah.
  - Ethical context:
    - Comprehensible to us:
      - A mother and her children are starving, she leaves them at her neighbour and disappears. After a year she comes back without a leg. She purposely put it under the train in order to collect insurance money to support her children.
      - A woman seduces her friend's husband. The betrayed woman is hurt.
    - Incomprehensible:
      - Sula's uncle was a WWI veteran and a heroin addict (he suffered from shell shock), his mother burns him alive with kerosene because of his mental instability → She believes that she gave him life, so she has the right to take it.
      - The woman who seduced the husband of her friend cannot understand the suffering of the betrayed woman, because it was nothing serious.

- **1987 *Beloved*** – set after the American Civil War, the main character, Sethe, kills her daughter and tries to kill her other three children when a posse arrives in Ohio to return them to Sweet Home, the plantation in Kentucky from which Sethe recently fled. A woman presumed to be her daughter, called Beloved, returns years later to haunt Sethe's home at 124 Bluestone Road, Cincinnati.
  - It is inspired by the story of an African-American slave, Margaret Garner, who temporarily escaped slavery during 1856 in Kentucky by fleeing to Ohio, a free state. A posse arrived to retrieve her and her children under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which gave slave owners the right to pursue slaves across state borders. Margaret killed her two-year-old daughter rather than allow her to be recaptured.
  - Characteristics:
    - Faulknerian influence
    - Magical realism
      - The murdered daughter comes back as a ghost to take revenge on her mother.
    - Psychoanalysis
    - Feminist themes
    - Gothicism
  - Did she have a right to kill her child?
  - The black community rejects Sethe but finally, they decide that she was punished enough and they get rid of the ghost.
- **1999 *Paradise*** - the story of the tension between the men of Ruby, Oklahoma and a group of women who lived in a former convent seventeen miles away.
  - It undermines all the accepted values in Western society: tradition, pride, decency.
  - What's pride-worth when you have to feed yourself or your child.

#### **1990s: A QUIET DECADE**

- Extreme themes are avoided,
- Ordinary experience,
- Theme of accepting the old age
  - Old people shown as human beings who are pathetic
    - **Margaret Atwood** *The Blind Assassin* (2000)
    - **Stanley Elkin** *Mrs Ted Bliss* (1995)
  - Reaction against the cult of youth.

#### **David Foster Wallace 1962-2008**

- **1996 *Infinite Jest*** - takes place in a semi-parodic future version of North America, and touches on tennis, substance addiction recovery programs, depression, child abuse, family relationships, advertising, popular entertainment, film theory, and Quebec separatism, among other topics.
  - **Literature hostile to the reader**
    - 1079 pages long,
    - Extremely difficult vocabulary,
      - Much of it invented by the author.
    - Endnotes are  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a book,
    - Forcing the reader to read about horrible things without knowing it,
    - Very sadistic.
  - Critics perceive it as a disturbing text.
- One of the most controversial writers in the recent years.
- He committed suicide by hanging himself.

**Ezra Pound****The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter***After Li Po*

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead  
 I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.  
 You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,  
 You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.  
 And we went on living in the village of Chōkan:  
 Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.  
 At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
 I never laughed, being bashful.  
 Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
 Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
 I desired my dust to be mingled with yours  
 Forever and forever, and forever.  
 Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed  
 You went into far Ku-tō-en, by the river of swirling eddies,  
 And you have been gone five months.  
 The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.  
 By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,  
 Too deep to clear them away!  
 The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.  
 The paired butterflies are already yellow with August  
 Over the grass in the West garden;  
 They hurt me.  
 I grow older.  
 If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,  
 Please let me know beforehand,  
 And I will come out to meet you  
 As far as Chō-fū-Sa.

**T.S. Eliot****The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
 A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
 Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
 Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
 Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
 Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
 Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
 Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
 The muttering retreats  
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
 Of insidious intent  
 To lead you to an overwhelming question ...  
 Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Let us go and make our visit.  
 In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
 The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
 Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
 Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
 Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
 And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
 Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
 For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
 Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
 There will be time, there will be time  
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
 There will be time to murder and create,  
 And time for all the works and days of hands  
 That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
 Time for you and time for me,  
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
 Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
 Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
 To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —  
 (They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")  
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —  
 (They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")  
 Do I dare  
 Disturb the universe?  
 In a minute there is time  
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:  
 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
 I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
 I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
 Beneath the music from a farther room.  
 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
 Then how should I begin  
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
 And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them  
all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown  
hair!)  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow  
streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of  
windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so  
peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and  
prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)  
brought in upon a platter,  
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,  
and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and  
me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at  
all;

That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the  
sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts  
that trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in  
patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a  
peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon  
the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

**Edna St. Vincent Millay**

**First Fig**

My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
It gives a lovely light.

**Wallace Stevens**

**Anecdote of the Jar**

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

**Edgar Lee Masters** (*Spoon River Anthology*)

**Amanda Barker**

HENRY got me with child,  
Knowing that I could not bring forth life  
Without losing my own.  
In my youth therefore I entered the portals of dust.

Traveler, it is believed in the village where I lived  
That Henry loved me with a husband's love,  
But I proclaim from the dust  
That he slew me to gratify his hatred.

**Robert Frost**

**The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.